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ESTHER, MOTHER FOUNDRESS

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The Mother Foundress
in 1927

ESTHER,
MOTHER FOUNDRESS

of the

Community of the Holy Name.

(Melbourne)

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To the
Glory of God
and in Honour of
those whom He calls out of the world
to serve Him
under the Vows of
The Religious Life.

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A FOREWORD.

'Give her of the fruit of her hands;
And let her own works praise her in the gates.'

The idea of vocation is inseparable from anything which might be written of those professing the Religious Life. God calls; and empowered by His grace the responsive soul rises to offer Him love for love in the dedication to Him of the entire being. We are accustomed to that thought, but it must needs be stressed again and again. A less familiar, though rightful, extension of it is found in the belief that there is a corporate vocation to be realized by each Community, and by it alone. The rays of the sun lighting upon a range of mountains touch its several peaks with varying glory; flushing one to tender rose, they paint another with regal gold, and etch the noble austerity of yet another. So it is with those men and women of heroic stature who were called by God to initiate such great spiritual ventures as the founding of new Communities. They differently apprehended the same gift, and manifested the Light as it was revealed to them by the Spirit, Who divides to each severally as He will. It follows, also, that the vocation given to the founder of a Community differs from that which is given to those who come after. To the founder is given the vision of some aspect of the manifold wisdom of God, and with that—a test of its reality—the power to preserve to the Church through the Community that which has been gained on the heavenly steeps. The responsibility of those who inherit a great tradition is to maintain the purity of the original intention and to transmit it unimpaired to succeeding generations.

A member of the Community to whom the Mother Foundress was unknown personally, dreamed that she saw her, lying apparently lifeless. Suddenly opening her eyes, the sleeper looked intently at the Sister, who began to assist her to rise. 'No. I will get up in my own way.' Yet she accepted the help and gave her daughter a loving embrace.

Writing of another 'Mother in Israel,' Mother Kate of St. Saviour's Priory, Father Stanton said, that 'life is one and indivisible, and we live again in those who are gone before, and they in us.' Our clumsy efforts, our faltering words, are not requisite to assist her to rise. She will get up in her own way, for it is God's way for her and to that she has been true through evil report and good report; true to that 'new name' which is the symbol of the unique relationship beween her soul and the God whom she adores.

Her indomitable spirit lives on, loving, cheering, encouragingly, chiding; her prayers ever rise for us before the Throne of God. When she was with us she taught that we should pray for each Sister daily by name, offering up her special needs. Can we think that she is less faithful now? Seeking then to identify herself with our Lord's ceaseless ministry of prayer and labour, so now we believe her to be yet more closely united to the Person and Purpose of Him Who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and of Whom with all virgin souls she could say: 'Whom I have seen, Whom I have loved, Whom with my whole heart I have desired'.

Chapter I.

THE VISION, AND THE VISIONARIES.

'A virtuous woman who can find.'

This is the story of a venture for God and His Church; a venture begun humbly and obscurely in the streets and lanes of Melbourne, and which, blessed by Him, has developed in various ways to the help and comfort of many sick and sinful and sorrowful ones, and to the strengthening of the Church in this land. In the events recorded we see how God uses the consecrated lives and surrendered wills of His servants as a means by which He may reveal Himself to men. We see, too, that by the illumination of His Spirit He makes known to those followers the ever greater heights of endeavour to which they must aspire for His sake, that His purposes of love may be fulfilled among us.

The Incarnate Life of our Lord is the supreme example of Divine intervention in the affairs of men. In the light of the full consummation of that mystery, we tend to forget that there is another glory of the stars whose borrowed light heralds the coming of the Sun of Righteousness. When our Lord came to earth He came as 'the Desire of the Fathers', the Long-expected One. Simeon and Anna are the great exemplars of those who, through the long night of waiting, kept faithful vigil.

Long the ages rolled and slowly
To the coming of the Word,
Fervent longings grew more fervent
Undismayed by hope deferred.

The 'fulness of the times' must refer pre-eminently to the musings, longings and strivings in the hearts of men, whose aspirations came to fruition in the surrendered will and spotless purity of her who held up her life a chalice to God, to receive of the fulness of His grace. So, in a lesser way, we may expect and do find such circumstances epitomized in those events of history through which He ever comes, revitalizing His Church and renewing His Presence among us. To-day the Community is established securely; the Sisters' ministry of prayer and work has been woven into the very life of the Church. The fine buildings in which that work is done witness to the vigorous growth of the Mission. In the day of achievement let us remember with thankfulness those who prayed and hoped, and believed that achievement was possible because they relied upon the infinite resources of God.

The Community is fortunate in having preserved in its archives much valuable and detailed information concerning the inception of the Mission and the founding of the Community. Any student of history can recall the thrilling moment when he stumbles upon what is, perhaps, the great romance of such research—the springing to life of the personalities of the past. So from the worn note-books of Council and Executive emerge the portraits of the pioneers of our Mission. Refusing to be shackled by such minutiae, the characters step forth, to maintain, with a fine consistency, the qualities for which they were known and valued in the days of their flesh.

Among those who have come to Victoria from England to fill the office of Bishop, Bishop Moorhouse is accounted, by general consent, the most distinguished. Though he did not remain in Melbourne long enough to see the Sisters established,

to him belong the remarkable foresight and wisdom in recognising the possibilities of a service such as theirs, and in taking the first steps to secure it. Even after his translation to the see of Manchester the Bishop continued to subscribe to the funds of the Mission, while the interest which both the Bishop and Mrs. Moorhouse felt in its development is shown in the books which they sent for the Sisters' library.

As Bishop of Melbourne, Bishop Moorhouse had desired for many years to establish a 'women's agency' in Melbourne for work in the 'lower parts of the city', particularly reformatory work among women. Early in 1885 the Bishop called a meeting of the clergy of St. Paul's, St. Peter's and St. John's churches, and proposed to them the Mission which should be carried to those parts of the city which lay within their parishes. The proposal of the Bishop was accepted by the three Incumbents (Canon Bromby, Canon Handfield and Canon Chase), and in March the Bishop called another and larger meeting at St. Paul's Church. An influential Council was formed to collect funds and administer the business of the Mission. Canon Handfield was appointed Chaplain of the organisation.

In the person of Henry Handfield, we have the visionary to whose spiritual gifts were added the persistence and the practical ability to make his dreams come true; the possessor, too, of that exquisite tact and courtesy which dissolves the little difficulties and frictions which arise when those of varying temperament and upbringing first band themselves together for the furtherance of a common object. The zeal and scrupulous fidelity which he now brought to the office of Chaplain of the Mission were placed also at the service of the Sisters when, later, he became their first Warden.

'Of the chief women, not a few', who formed that first Mission Council, it would be difficult to speak in terms commensurate with justice. Not only were their time and strength given freely in personal service, but upon them rested the responsibility of financing all the early ventures of the work. If Mrs. H. Darlot, the first Treasurer, stands out for her vigour of mind and promptitude of action, others are no whit behind in faithfulness and length of service. That the service was costly we cannot doubt. As well as the problems which, as then, have to be met to-day, they had to commend a new and untried course to a Church and people whose social conscience was but stirring from sleep. 'We figure much better this year', writes Mrs. Darlot thankfully, 'and I wish I were sure it would be my last audit, for I should be extremely glad of rest from the worry of the money matters of the Mission. I seem always to be occupied with L.s.d.' Nevertheless, this faithful soul carried the burden for many years, and laid it down only to assume another equally great, that of Secretary of the Mission Council.

In the August of 1885 (the date being that of the Feast of the Holy Name), Canon Handfield circulated a public appeal for help for the 'Mission of the Church of England to the Streets and Lanes of Melbourne'. Commended 'earnestly and affectionately' to his people by the Bishop, this appeal sought assistance in the establishment of a Home in the city from whence a Mission in the Name of the Redeemer would go to the fallen. The earnest aspirations of these pioneers thus found voice:

> It is proposed that Ladies duly qualified, and with the commission of the Bishop, should live at the Home. They would visit in the lanes and courts, and bring the message of the Gospel to the poor and

> fallen, and by the force of their Sisterly example 'compel' the outcast to 'come in' to the house of their Father. This is the main feature of the Mission. It is now to be tried for the first time in Melbourne. The object is to have the presence of good women near where the sadness prevails. The hope is that such a presence will be a leaven of good. . . .
>
> To help to organize and equip such a Mission, the Council makes this appeal to the members of the Church. We ask for the active help of those, who, having leisure, will aid in the work. We ask for the prayers of the clergy and laity, that the Good Shepherd will inspire, with His self-devotion, fit persons for this special work of the redemptive ministry of His Church.

The Bishop and Mrs. Moorhouse gave generously to this appeal. Mrs. Moorhouse interested Lady Loch (wife of the Governor of Victoria) in the proposal, and they two advocated a public meeting to make the need known.

That same year, for the sum of £700, a property was purchased in Little Lonsdale Street, with a back entrance into Merritt Place. This building, formerly a baker's shop and dwelling, consisted of shop and bakery on the ground floor, with five rooms above. Unable to pay for the necessary alterations, the premises were let until the following year, when the 'Bible-woman' of St. Paul's Church, Mrs. Davies, entered into temporary residence. Her son and daughter lived with her there, and enquiries were made for a suitable lady to take charge. Various ladies, members of the Council, came at stated times to help with the visiting and to conduct classes and meetings. These voluntary helpers saw the need for the provision of a 'Night Refuge', or temporary shelter, for those

in whom the persuasions of 'the Ladies' might awaken a desire to escape from the evil of their lives. What wonderful faith was theirs! They are so sure that in answer to their prayers the workers will come, that they plan and legislate for their work in the days when as yet there was none of them.

Among other things, it was desired that a Sunday afternoon or evening mission service should be held to which those might be induced to go who would not go to church, and that other and greater work for the furtherance of the Redeemer's kingdom should be developed as soon as suitable women would offer themselves.

With no depreciation of the good work done by voluntary helpers, who will always be needed, the appeal for the full-time services of women is sounded repeatedly. By constant reference to the Ministry of Women within the Church, the minds of the church-people of the day are prepared for their coming; sound and patient teaching is given concerning this Ministry, from the Order of Deaconesses within the Primitive Church, through the Middle Ages when women were associated in convents under religious vows, down to the revival of such a ministry in the Church of England.

That Bishop Moorhouse had desired the founding of a Religious Community in Melbourne, we know from Bishop Stephen. While distrustful of any 'extreme tendencies', Bishop Goe—who succeeded Bishop Moorhouse—was anxious to secure the service of women in the heart of the city, for the carrying of the Gospel to those not reached by ordinary parochial organizations. He expressed his belief, that 'a group of women, wearing a simple distinctive dress by which they might be known as people set apart for spiritual duties, would meet with a success in the work to be performed . . . as no other agency had yet attained.'

The second Annual Report of the Mission Council closed with these moving and prophetic words:

> It is thought that, for continued and systematic work, aggressive and redemptive, in the streets and lanes of the city of Melbourne, it is self-evident to all at least who value Church order that the special authority of the Bishop, authorizing and blessing a special devotion, will give great advantage to those whose hearts God has moved to work among the poor. *This little beginning, moreover, may grow to that which is greater than itself,* and supply to the Church an organization by which the dwellers in the streets and lanes may be compelled to come in when the gracious Lord has made ready the feast of His love, and waits only for the guests.

Three years after the first proposal made by Bishop Moorhouse, we have a picture of the members of the Mission Council striving to the utmost of their power to fulfil the object of their association, but all conscious that they are waiting—waiting for the better things to come. The recurring note in the Minutes, an enquiry addressed to Canon Handfield whether he has heard of any ladies offering for the work, mounts to its crescendo in the earlier parts of 1888: 'Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?'

We now turn our attention to the one chosen by God to guide and extend the work of the Mission, and, more significantly, to occupy a unique and daring position, that of founding the first Religious Community of the Church of England in this great continent of Australia.

Chapter II.

A CHOSEN VESSEL.

'She girdeth her loins with strength,
And maketh strong her arms.'

Emma Caroline Silcock was born on May 26th, 1858, at Sutton, near Stalham, in the county of Norfolk, the eldest child of Thomas and Sarah Elizabeth Silcock. She grew up with a sister who was a few years younger than herself, but she was grown and out in the world before her brother was born, so that they are almost strangers to each other.

While very young, the two sisters were sent as boarders to 'The Ladies' School', Dedham, in Essex, where they received an excellent education. The principals of this school were their aunts, the Misses E. and A. Barber. These two remarkable women, of hallowed memory to all who knew them, were, with their grandfather, the chief formative influence in the life of their niece. Here, in the heart of the Constable country, she grew, and her eager mind expanded. Music was her delight. One who was with her at school at Sutton and Dedham, and with whom she used to play duets, tells us that while very young she declared: 'I am bold and resolute!' Thus early the keynote of her character was struck—a forcefulness, a fearlessness, given for a purpose still hidden in the counsels of God.

This distinctive mark, this boldness and resolution, was inherited, perhaps, from her maternal grandfather, George Simpson Barber, a man of great character and integrity. Though probably rather puritanical, he was, none the less, an

admirable man, and his little granddaughter loved him dearly. Holidays were spent in his home, where Emma's mother was living during the absence from England of Mr. Silcock. A Justice of the Peace, Mr. Barber would take Emma with him as he drove about in his gig, and so that beautiful and not uncommon thing, a friendship between an elderly man and a little girl, was fostered.

Because of a scandal of a Rector who drank, Emma's great-grandfather had left the Church and become a Baptist. But the atmosphere of dissent was alien to her from the first, and Emma had an innate conviction that beauty in worship was a tribute meet for the Artist of the Universe. Struck by the disparity between the beautiful appointments of home and table and the chilly severity of the chapel, one Sunday at dinner the little girl gave voice. 'When I am grown up I shall have a beautiful church. I shall not mind what is in my house, but I shall have beautiful things in my church.' Though severely reprimanded, her predilections remained unchanged. She continued to drive with her grandfather in his carriage to chapel, but as she grew older she began to exercise her right of private judgment about attendance at the services. The ugliness of the building repelled her; the absence from the service of the note of restraint made her uncomfortable. Strength was met by strength, and it says much for her grandfather's magnanimity that she was allowed to remain outside, where she contentedly read a French novel. In spite of the growing divergence in their views, they remained fast friends, and at his death Mr. Barber bequeathed his earthly possessions to his two granddaughters.

Leaving the school at Dedham, at the age of 17 Emma went to Brussels to perfect herself in Music and French, in which subjects she excelled. In exchange for learning French,

she taught English in the school. Musically, she was very gifted, and she had as her master a pupil of Mendelssohn.

It was in Belgium that she came in contact with a saintly Jesuit priest, and as this was her first experience of what a living religion could be, the attraction to it was very great. The Jesuit, for his part, naturally did his utmost to persuade her, and she placed herself under instruction. Two things saved her for us—rather, two facets of the clear shining jewel of truth—historical truth and moral truth.

Providentially, the year before she went to Belgium she had sat for the Cambridge Local Examination, and having taken Church History as one of her subjects, she had learnt much of the English Branch of the Church Catholic, and its sound historical claim to the retention of the Apostolic Succession. She was, therefore, unable to accept the Papal claims of present-day Roman Catholicism. On moral grounds, her rejection was even stronger and more forcible. 'I was taught', she said, 'that under certain conditions it might be permissible or even right to tell a lie. I could not see how the God of Truth could be worshipped by untruth. So I would have none of them.'

Returning to England at the end of two years, she came more directly in contact with her mother's cousins, Philip and the Reverend Walter Page. The latter had been ordained for the diocese of Nassau, and except for a few years in England, he spent all his active ministry in the Bahama Islands. Philip was not very strong, but Emma did not realize this at first, and thought some toughening process was needed. One night she nearly danced him to death, while he, for his part, would not give in and confess his weakness. She was punished well by the fright she had, as he became whiter and whiter and she thought she had killed him.

Like Alison Dale, a girl of Emma's own age who now became her constant companion, the two brothers had been caught up by the Oxford Movement within the Church, and when this influence was extended to her, through them, she was moved profoundly. Understanding now the place of the Church in God's plan of redemption, there came also the vision of the wonder and dignity of Catholic worship, and of the beauty of life when lived in harmony with such concepts. The Reverend T. Burkitt Dover, author of 'A Lent Manual' and other spiritual writings, prepared her for the Sacraments which would mark her admission into the Church, her true home, and she was baptized at St. Mary's Church, Bryanston Square, on the eve of St. George's Day, 1877. It was a day of pouring rain, and her sister, who, with Alison Dale, was present as witness, describes her in a long white dress and veil, climbing into the cab after the service, happy but bedraggled.

The years that followed were a time of spiritual growth, when the buds put forth promise of the flowers and fruit to come. Alison Dale and 'E.C.S.', as she styled herself, were interested in the development of the Religious Life in the Church. Together they stayed at the Mother Houses of many of those Sisterhoods which had been called into being by the Holy Spirit as the essential Catholicism of the Church reasserted itself. Contrary to popular belief, it is not customary for Religious Communities to invite individuals to join them, but already her vocation must have been evident to those with eyes to see, and in one Community this generally accepted rule was put aside, and she was asked :'When are you coming to us?' 'Never!' was her reply. 'Or not until you give up your lay Sisters.' Such a downright statement comes startlingly from a young girl, but even then she had the gift of

speaking forcibly, perhaps daringly, without giving offence, and it seems to have been taken in good part.

A prolonged stay was made at Malling Abbey, where the two friends were engaged upon something in the nature of an archaeological survey of that historic site. Together they pored over the archives and put the records into chronological order. In 1912, nearly thirty years later, there were some Sisters who still remembered her, and wrote to invite her to come to them as their Mother Superior. This was shortly before the West Malling Community slid into Rome in the wake of the Caldey Island Fathers, and probably some of the senior Sisters read the trend of events and tried to forestall them.

These visits, and the being on terms of intimacy with members of different Communities, gave her an insight into the various forms of the Religious Life which was of great practical value later. Undoubtedly, it was part of the preparation designed for one who was herself to found, and guide through forty-three years, the first Religious Community in Australia.

It was during this time that Miss Silcock was offered a very attractive position in Constantinople. An English girl who could teach Mathematics was wanted to take charge of the education of the daughters of Turkish nobles, who were beginning to appreciate Western civilization. She was to receive a handsome salary, and to live at the British Embassy, enjoying the privileges of a daughter in the Ambassador's family. But she was not to teach Christianity. If the girls asked about her religion she must evade giving information. This her conscience would not allow her to do, though in her account of the matter she preferred to throw the onus for the renunciation upon her spiritual adviser. She went to him. 'I

have been offered this', she said, 'and I intend to take it.' The second part of the statement is stamped with the provocative spirit of youth, curious to see if the bait will be swallowed. It was. No worldly considerations bore weight here. 'You cannot', he said. 'With your enthusiasm for God and His Church. you cannot take a position in which so much of that would be shut out of your life.' In conclusion, he bade her 'kneel there' until she had made up her mind. She rose from her knees to reject the offer—stirring to one with her sense of adventure—for she saw clearly that she could not hold a position in which she was not to confess Christ before men.

It can be understood very readily how a situation such as this precipitated a spiritual crisis in her life, presenting as it did the inescapable questions: 'What think ye of Christ?', and, 'Lovest thou me more than these?' With her, the response to the Divine Love ever issued in acts of the will, and now the claims of that Love pressing upon her were revealed as a call to a literal following of her Master in ways of poverty and self-denial. Forsaking worldly prosperity, she asked to be received into the Community of St. Mary the Virgin at Wantage, which, with its dual object of prayer and work, and its strong family life where all were one in Christ, seemed to her the ideal of the Religious State, the nearest to heaven on earth.

On October 8th, 1884, she received the Habit of Religion. The Log Book of C.S.M.V. records the event, and that 'the Canon gave the Address.' This was William John Butler, Canon of Worcester, afterwards Dean of Lincoln, who while Vicar of Wantage had founded the Community there. The first decisive step had been taken some time before, when, as we learn from the same source: 'Miss Silcock came from St. Mary's School where she is teaching. She wishes to become

a postulant.' On being clothed as a Novice she took the name of Esther (there was already a Sister Emma in the Community), and was known as Novice Esther Emma, or, more generally, as Novice Esther.

With all the ardour of her strong, generous nature, she threw herself into her training. Though a Novice is free to leave her Community up to the time of taking her Vows, the normal end of the Novitiate is Profession, and this lays upon the Novice the obligation of wholeheartedness in the pursuit of those virtues and dispositions which will fit her to make that great act of consecration. Instructions upon the Rule and upon various aspects of the Life, Retreat notes, private prayers and meditations, were preserved by Novice Esther with scrupulous care. Even pencilled notes, made hurriedly more than sixty years ago, are legible to-day, though sometimes the writer breaks off, overcome, perhaps, by the sublimity of the thought presented, or, it may be, by a temporary inability to keep pace with the instructor.

In all the new associations which she now made, Novice Esther was very happy, loving and being loved. This relationship of mutual love and confidence was marked especially between the Novice and her Novice Mistress, Sister Eliza Mary. It was not everyone who could have trained this Novice, but here, in the atmosphere of high endeavour which pertains to the Wantage Community, this strong soul wrought in her pupil a great love of her vocation and an unerring grasp of its principles. Sister Emily Harriet, C.S.M.V., now in Paradise, told the writer that she and Novice Esther were contemporaries, and that all the Novices loved Novice Esther, who was somewhat of a pickle. The Novice Mistress was regarded as a rather stern person, and the Novices, with one exception, were a little afraid of her. Not so Novice Esther,

for whom the Mistress seemed to have a special regard, and who always turned to her in perfect confidence of being understood. Sister Emily Harriet retained a vivid recollection of Novice Esther about to enter the Novice Mistress' study for an interview. Either she was about to make some daring request, or, impelled by duty, to speak of some difficult or delicate matter, for she squared her shoulders resolutely, remarking, 'If I perish, I perish!'

The Wantage Log Books record the goings to and comings from the Branch Houses. Her flair for Mission and rescue work must have been apparent from the first, and she spent the earlier part of her Novitiate in London, at St. Anne's Mission House and St. James' Home, Fulham, thus winning that experience which was to be invaluable when her life-work commenced. Returning to the Mother House at Wantage, she was appointed Organist, and assisted the Choir Mistress in many ways. Sister Grace, C.S.M.V., writes of those days :

> In October, 1883, I went to Wantage at the invitation of Sister Emma, who was my Aunt and Godmother, as she was desirous of having me properly prepared for Confirmation. Sister Emma was Choir Mistress, and was also in charge of the Embroidery Room. She it was who knew Novice Esther best and had most to do with her, because of the music. She was anxious to revive the original Plain Chant in our Community, and she found in Novice Esther a valuable helper as she played the organ well and grasped the special harmonies necessary for the accompaniment of the music. As I could sing, and voices were not very numerous in those days, I was allowed (though a secular), to attend the Sisters' practices. Thus I came to know

a little of Novice Esther, and all you say of her I can quite remember.

In those days we had no music Printing Press, and Dr. Palmer did not appear to help us forward until about 1890. Novice Esther used to help Sister Emma in doing out the copies of the music. Sister Emma went sometimes to the British Museum and copied some of the Manuscripts, and she and the Novice used to duplicate them on a tray of some sort of glycerine jelly. Sister Emma was very fond of the Novice, though I think she found her sometimes as Sister Emily Harriet remarked, somewhat of a pickle. But she was much beloved. She was always considered delicate, I believe, and there were doubts whether she would be able to continue in our Community. I do not remember the accident to her back, but of course they would not tell me all the details of her health. I was only eighteen years old then (now I am eighty-one), and had no idea that I should ever be able to be a Sister, so the secrets of the family were hidden from me to a great measure, save what I gleaned from my dear Aunt. It is such ancient history now. I treasure the bond between us.

In the pioneer work of restoring the Plain Chant in its integrity to the English Church, Novice Esther, therefore, had a part. Her musical talent was given directly to the service of God, and in one sense it was this which was responsible for changing the course of her life, being used by God for the furtherance of His holy purpose. Before the period of her Novitiate had expired, she was practising one day alone in the chapel. Her shortness of stature placed her sometimes

at a disadvantage, and perhaps this day more than ordinarily her soul was rapt away in the harmonies of Heaven. Reaching for the pedals she over-balanced, and falling backwards from the high organ stool she lay for some time unconscious and undiscovered. Once again, her erstwhile fellow-Novice could describe the happenings of the day when she went to the hospital at Oxford, the happiness of her return, and her humorous account of being 'strung-up' while enclosed in plaster of Paris.

Six months went by. The Novice's habit hid alike the heavy plaster and the fragile body. Knowing her superlative courage, we may be sure that with her joyousness she strove to hide her pain from others, and to fulfil all the duties of her calling. The work as Organist was resumed; imaginative sympathy enables us to enter into her sufferings as the unwieldy plaster cut into her thigh, causing a scar which she carried for many years. It was obvious that she was losing ground, and Dr. Garrett Anderson was consulted (she in whose memory as one of the early women doctors the great hospital near St. Pancras has been built). Her verdict was final and absolute: twelve months out of England in a warmer climate, or, almost inevitably, a tubercular back would result. 'Go to South Africa. Haven't you any relatives in South Africa to whom you could go?' No, there were not any relatives in South Africa, for South Africa already had its Mother Cecile, while Australia was waiting for its Mother Esther.

The sorrow at leaving Wantage was very great, and was felt, not only by the one going into exile, but by those whom she was leaving. 'Oh, my dearest Child, how can we let you go?' cried Mother Lucy. Too heart-broken for tears, the Novice made her farewells. If it was hard to part with Mother Lucy, the Mother-General, it cost her great anguish to leave

'Mother Luke', as in secret she called her dear Sister Eliza Mary. As far as possible they softened the blow to her. She was allowed to leave in her habit, and to keep it by her to comfort her, but that she might be free to relax and to do whatever would restore her health most speedily, she was instructed to resume secular dress when she returned to her parents' home to prepare for her voyage.

'Only a year, and then you can come back to us.' Thus they comforted her, and with that promise she left them, and with that hope and intention she came to Australia to stay with her uncles and aunts, Mr. and Mrs. George, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Barber.

Chapter III.

A VENTURE FOR GOD.

'She is like the merchant ships;
She bringeth her food from afar.'

There was living in Melbourne at the time of which we write, a Mrs. J. Mackay, who had worked with Sister Esther in the London slums. Mrs. Mackay was a friend of the Camerons, a family recently come from Scotland to live at St. Kilda, close to Mrs. Darlot, the Treasurer of the Mission. When the French steamer which brought her from England berthed at Port Melbourne, Sister Esther was met by Mrs. Mackay who took her to the Cameron's home, her aunt, Mrs. Barber, being unable to receive her because of illness. In this congenial society Sister Esther would feel at home, and able to speak freely of the interests nearest her heart. After calling upon her there, Mrs. Darlot invited her to her own home many times, to question her about the work in London and to seek her advice on the many problems associated with similar work in Melbourne. Sister Esther's evident knowledge and ability, and the burning enthusiasm which possessed her and with which she was able to fire others, must have kindled the thought that here at last was the answer to many prayers.

It was in this way that in the year 1888 the Council of the Mission heard of one who they immediately hoped might devote her services to the cause they had at heart. The matter was spoken of at the June meeting, and by July Canon Handfield had the satisfaction of reporting that he had received a

letter from Miss Silcock, who, in the meantime, had joined her relatives at Warrnambool.

Though still far from robust, the sea voyage had a most beneficial effect upon the invalid's health. The open-air life in the healthy Western District, and the driving about with Mr. and Mrs. George Barber in the country surrounding their home at Rosebank, Essendon, wrought still greater improvement. The friends at St. Kilda were not forgotten, and it was while on a visit to them that Mrs. Darlot had the happiness of introducing Sister Esther to Canon Handfield. He, for his part, was delighted with her, recognizing with great thankfulness that in her were fused most admirably the strength and gentleness of character, the devotion and sanity, which fitted her for a great work. While thinking her very frail and delicate to undertake such a hard task, he promised that if she would help them she would have all the support and loyalty that a strong Mission Council could give. Well and faithfully that promise was fulfilled; through many vicissitudes they were with her to uphold her, Canon Handfield in particular supporting her every suggestion.

Sister Esther, for her part, could not but be moved by the manifest need. The thought of being at work again drew her irresistibly; the difficulties of the task served only to make it more attractive. It had pleased God to restore to her a measure of her former health; now surely He was calling her to help for a time this poor and struggling Mission. So it was that she agreed to direct the work until it should be well established and workers trained, when she herself would return to Wantage. But God in His wisdom had endowed this woman of heroic courage and wide vision with singular gifts of the Holy Spirit for working out His purpose in this new land. On the 5th September, 1888, Sister Esther took up her

residence in the Mission House in Little Lonsdale Street, and her life work was begun.

Miss Mitchell, who had offered her services and had been accepted on probation (she retired shortly afterwards because of ill-health), had to be clothed in a suitable fashion and in a style not too unlike her companion, who had her much-loved Habit, that of a Wantage Novice. Mrs. Darlot undertook to meet 'the Ladies' in order to purchase a bonnet and cloak for Miss Mitchell. No sooner are they living at the Mission House than we have frequent references to 'the Ladies'; 'one of the Ladies' was requested to help with the Mothers' Meetings, attendances at which had fallen off. Much pleasure was expressed at the progress made since 'the Ladies' entered the House. Benches are ordered for the coming Mission Services.

The zeal and enthusiasm of this ardent soul were far in advance of her physical strength, and by December she was greatly in need of rest; indeed 'owing to the ill-health of the Ladies in the House, all entertainments are postponed until January'. Miss Ellen Okins had been accepted as a probationer, but could not come into residence until early the following year. This was the Sister Ellen of the future, who was then nearing the completion of her training as a Nurse at the Children's Hospital. In her spare time she was often at the Mission House, and coming under Sister Esther's influence she was infected by her enthusiasm, loving her very greatly from the first. Sister Esther is described at this time as 'looking around for some likely girls to help her'. Did she see in Christina Cameron, high-spirited and auburn-haired, fresh from her beloved Highlands, one whose faith and love would help to weld together the little Community, and whose courage would laugh at the almost incredible difficulties through which they were to pass together? Miss Cameron had been

helping at the Mission House on Sunday evenings, by collecting the people before the service and giving out books at the door, and now, with the departure of Miss Mitchell, there is room for her to stay. In an interview with Canon Handfield she is questioned as to her ability for the work, and frankly states that she does not know in the least whether she can do it, but that she would like to try. (We know now what a long life of service opened on that simple and unpretentious note. Sixty years. And still we have her as our treasure, and still we can warm ourselves in the sunshine of that never-failing, all-embracing love.)

For young women living in Little Lonsdale Street and entering the squalid courts and low houses of the neighbourhood, the protection of a distinctive dress was an immediate practical necessity. Sister Ellen was neat in her nurse's uniform, and this was to suffice for a time, but Sister Christina had to renounce her worldly garments for the queerest collection of clothes any girl was asked to don. Oh, the high honour of being accepted as a Probationer, of being allowed to live at the rat-infested Mission House, to sleep in a room where a bit of curtain served as a door, and whose window looked impartially upon a stable, a yard where a Chinese cabinet-maker plied his trade, and a house of ill-fame whose habitues threw kerosene lamps at each other, seemingly all night, shrieking like sirens the while. 'We didn't have much comfort there,' one of these Sisters said, 'but we didn't think of that. We loved everything, and could laugh at ourselves. We were very happy.'

Up from the Mission Room which occupied the whole of the lower floor, ran a steep and narrow staircase. Screened by a curtain, the landing formed an oratory. The first of the Sisters' chapels, it was too poor and makeshift to be called a chapel. A tiny altar carried a cross, candlesticks and flowers.

Above it hung a curtain and, later, a triptych painted by Sister Esther after the Chinese cabinet-maker had cut and shaped the wood for her. Scarcely was there room for six chairs crammed against each other. On the far side of the banister a high window threw down some light, but as in imagination we gaze on that scene, we see it as the Manger of Bethlehem is seen, illuminated by the Light that never was on land or sea. Here Faith and Hope and Love are burning brightly, and by these He Who is the Word and Wisdom of God is discerned, and worshipped, and carried forth to those for whom He came. With great difficulty, but with equal earnestness, the Divine Office was studied and recited by our first Sisters. They prayed, they worked, they lay down to rest, and they rose to pray and work again.

Now the work began to take shape. Besides visiting in the houses of the slum dwellers, the Sisters regularly visited the Melbourne Hospital, the Eye and Ear, Homœopathic, and Children's Hospitals, and others as occasion demanded. The Melbourne Gaol and the Carlton Refuge took their toll of the Sisters' time and strength. A Busy Bee Club was held every Monday evening. This Club grew out of the visits paid by the Sisters to the girls of the factories in their luncheon hour. The proprietors gladly gave leave for this visiting, and opportunities were made for private interviews with the girls, if they so desired. The 'Busy Bees' came to the Mission House as soon as they finished work, and paid 3d. for the meal provided, a substantial (if starchy) one of meat pies, scones, bread and butter, tea and pastry. After tea various people gave the girls some instruction or entertainment; sometimes nurses from the Children's, or the Eye and Ear Hospitals gave lectures in bandaging, bed-making or care of the sick, etc. Several doctors came to help; Dr. Hamilton Russell, Dr. Jeff Woods, Dr.

Hobhill Cole, and Dr. Guthiel. These entertained the girls with music, lectures and demonstrations of various kinds.

Monday afternoons were occupied with Mothers' meetings, whose numbers gradually soared from 'only two Mothers braved the rain' of 1889, to the '59 women and 28 babies' or '65 Mothers and innumerable babies', of a year or two later. The women sewed, learned how to adapt used garments for their children and men folk, or stitched the new clothes which a Sister or the faithful Miss Woolley had spent the morning cutting out. The material for these, and for the girls' handwork, was provided by members of the Council and by the growing band of women who were rallying to the Sisters' banner. Then would follow an address given by Canon Handfield, or his Curate, or some other priest, or one of the Sisters. Proceedings closed with a cup of tea, but still there would be many who wanted a word with Sister.

In an article in a Ballarat paper of January, 1889, a visitor to Melbourne has left us a picture of that part of the city surrounding the Mission House, and of the Sisters' work in its initial stages:

> Crossing Spring Street, my steps are bent towards a dingy quarter of the town, a thickly populated part, the old dilapidated houses thickly clustered together. No bright flowers bloom here to relieve the bare look of these homes. The air is vitiated by smells of rubbish lying here and there in the narrow yards, and the sunshine serves only to reveal that which is dirty, close and abominable in the alleys. Another turning brings me to the Mission Hall, the home of Sister Esther and Miss ———, two lady missionaries of the Church of England who devote all their time to the poor,

administering to the sick, alleviating the misery caused by drink, rescuing the fallen and restoring them from the paths of sin and shame to become once more men and women eager and earnest to obtain an honest living. . . .

One poor wreck of a woman, to whom Sister Esther gives a packet of coffee, takes me aside to tell me all that Sister has done for her. Her words are inadequate to express her reverence and gratitude to these lady missionaries, who for love of their Master and obedience to His commands, untiringly sought her out from the evil haunts, and helped her to break those habits which were as iron bands dragging her down to eternal woe.

Representatives of the Melbourne press were not slow in realising that a work, unprecedented in this place, was afoot. 'Here, in the midst of the vice of the city, live three gentlewomen who have given themselves to this work.' They came to see, stayed to wonder, and went away to fill column after column with praise of the Sisters and of what they were accomplishing. One, with more perspicacity than most, understands that Amiel's words were illuminated for him by his visit to Little Lonsdale Street. We give here the passage quoted:

Life is an apprenticeship in progressive renunciation, in the continual reduction of our claims, our hopes, our powers, our liberty. The circle contracts more and more. You hoped to learn, to see, to attain, to possess everything, and in every direction you touch a limit. . . One must accept a smaller and smaller part, make oneself little and humble, be limited, weak, dependent, ignorant, mean, poor,

> stripped of everything, and learn to look from everything to God. . . It is in this nothingness that one finds some life again, because the Divine spark is there at the bottom. You renounce yourself and in growing love you regain true greatness.

This newspaperman is a student, not only of the French philosopher, but also, perhaps, of the English mystics, for his words bring an echo of the Lady Julian as he goes on to say that 'the Sisters, though clothed as sombrely as nuns, are comely to look upon, and of blithe and gladsome cheer'.

Ironically, much publicity came the way of her who sought always to avoid it and wished only to serve hidden from the eyes of the world and the strife of tongues. On the whole those of the secular press were kinder than those who were soon writing to complain of 'the popish women'. The full flavour of such an absurdity can be appreciated only by those who knew Sister Esther's true loyalty to the Church of her Baptism. The humour of the situation compensated a little for what was, and remained, a great trial, that her name should be bandied about in the public press. The publicity that came to her was not of her choosing; it was the inevitable lot of one called to pioneer a new, or renewed, way of life in the Church. She herself was ever the lover, as she was the example, of the hidden life.

We have digressed a little, and anticipated the expression of opinions which were but trends of thought in the year of which we write. Let us return to the consideration of that period.

As the work grew and responsibilities multiplied, and as those first associates threw round their leader the strong ties of their affection and need of guidance, it became clear that this duty of doing the work nearest at hand constituted a call

which could not be set aside. The authorities at Wantage were consulted: 'You may return', came the answer, 'but you are doing an amazing work there. It is clearly your duty to stay.' The voice of duty was ever the Voice of God; that it spoke sternly at times was no reason that it should be disregarded. The longing for home was very real. The beauty and order and dignity of life in gracious England contrasted cruelly with the harsh makeshifts of a new country; the absence of architectural beauty from the churches, the crudeness of the appointments, greatly offended one who was so sensitive of the honour due to the Majesty of God. But, as always, her strength was fed by the secret spring of grace, and in prayer God's Will was revealed, and accepted. 'Vocation is one of those things which reveal to us the intimacy of God's relation to our soul', she was able to write later. 'Kneel there until you have made up your mind', was applied to this as to former and later decisions, and obedience and surrender brought the joy of fulfilment.

Sometimes in later years she would refer, half-laughingly, half-ruefully, to her long exile. 'O you Australians!' she would say to her Sisters, 'I did not ask for you; you grew on me like the hump on a camel's back.' Certainly here was a life which, offered in loving self-sacrifice to God, could so identify itself with the needs of others that their burdens became hers, to be carried bravely to the end.

With three Ladies living at the Mission House, and the work developing rapidly, some alterations and additions to the House became necessary. The indefatigable Mrs. Darlot accompanied Sister Esther in the search for 'suitable accommodation for the Ladies' during the rebuilding, but either this was not to be found close enough to their sphere of work, or else the Sisters decided it was better that they should remain where those in need could find them without difficulty, for

we learn of the Head Sister and the two probationers packing away the furniture, and the fun of picnicing in the more habitable parts of the house.

At the completion of this work—the rebuilding of the rear of the premises—a service was held on May 31st, 1889, when the Bishop solemnly dedicated the building in the Name of the Most Holy Trinity to the service of the Mission to the Streets and Lanes. Canon Handfield wrote publicly at this time of the three ladies who though not, as yet, under vows, 'form the beginning of a Religious Community, working with the recognition of the Bishop and under the general direction of the Chaplain, the Home itself being under the direction of the Head Sister.' Already it was recognised that there was a great advantage in having the leadership of one whose zeal and devotion were reinforced by the knowledge and readiness which came from experience. 'Her diligence, helped by her sound judgment, has been the chief strength of our work', records the Chaplain thankfully, as he sees vindicated his belief that 'the organised ministry of religious women will supply the force that is needed for the succour of the poor and the reclamation of the fallen.' Once again he is vested with the prophet's mantle: 'If it continue to grow in the same quiet manner, it will soon be evident that a new, and it may be hoped, a valuable organisation will have been grafted on effectually to our Church life.'

Sister Esther Sister Ellen Sister Christina

Chapter III.
(Continued)

EARLY MISSION WORK.

Methods and Ideals.

'Strength and dignity are her clothing;
And she laugheth at the time to come.'

Before resuming our narrative, it is convenient to insert here the touching and beautiful tribute from the Right Reverend Reginald Stephen, who was translated from the see of Tasmania to that of Newcastle (Province of New South Wales) in 1919. It was while at Newcastle that the Bishop persuaded the Mother Foundress to lend him some Sisters for work in that diocese. That work will be described in its place; here the Bishop refers to earlier days. He says:

> I have been asked to say something of what I remember of the beginnings of the C.H.N. in Melbourne. I remember the controversy raised by the proposal to ask Sister Esther to undertake the work. Three objections, amongst others, were put forward: For one thing, it was not right to ask women to work amongst degraded and criminal classes, where they were likely to meet with insult and even violence. This was met by the experience of such work in London, which showed that these fears were imaginary. Then came the familiar complaint that such Communities were imitations of a Roman model and therefore should be banned by a 'Protestant' Church. Answers were given which satisfied reason-

able persons; though not the complainants. Allied to this was the protest against the dress of the Sisters. It was not only Roman in form, but it would attract unfavourable notice and expose the wearers to insult. On this point, Bishop Moorhouse spoke with his usual vigour, and explained that the distinctive habit was in reality a protection, and experience in London proved that it soon became known as the dress of women whose devoted lives gained them respect from every class.

So Sister Esther began work, and was followed shortly by Sister Ellen. The locality chosen for their headquarters was the eastern end of Little Lonsdale Street, and the saintly Vicar of St. Peter's was appointed their Chaplain. But at that time it was not Little Lonsdale Street as we know it. The eastern end was notorious as the haunt of criminals, and of men, women and children who were degraded by their environment. Even the police walked warily in that district. It was at the so-called 'Model School' on its border that the children responded to Canon Handfield's attempt to give a Scripture lesson by throwing their books at him when he entered. However, a disused shop was secured and adapted as a Home for the Sisters. A massive door was installed, with an iron grille through which visitors could be inspected before admission. It was not long before visitors became numerous and the Home established as the one bright spot in a squalid neighbourhood. Here those troubled in mind, body or estate could come, sure of sympathy and of such help as could be given. And

here began those strange friendships with the families of 'crooks', and often with the 'crooks' themselves, that help us to understand the friendship of the Master with publicans and sinners.

For three months I was Canon Handfield's curate; but I did not have much to do with the Sisters and their work. That was the Canon's province. On every Monday he met Sister Esther and discussed her work and its problems, and every Friday he went down to conduct a simple service for the Sisters and the slowly growing body of those attracted by the life and work of those devoted women. I must confess that at first I was afraid of Sister Esther. I always felt that behind her charm of manner was a keen brain and a ready tongue that might bring disaster to a shy and incompetent youth. She gave me the impression that she did not suffer fools gladly. Perhaps she never reached this height of meekness, but her courtesy encouraged one in the hope that she did. It was not till years afterwards that I learned to appreciate, to honour, and to love, not only her work, but herself.

Sister Ellen was, in many ways, a contrast to her Superior; a simple, gentle woman, of great attractiveness. Alas! She died before the full value of her influence could be realised. I cannot say more of the earliest period of the Community. For some years I saw nothing of them, and it was only when I came to Brighton that I was able to watch the rapid development of their new venture, the establishment of the Children's Home. But from that day to this

I have never ceased to be thankful for their coming, and for the services they have rendered to the Church of Christ.

Thus, with characteristic humility, speaks the distinguished scholar and man of saintly life, esteeming others better than himself. The impression which Sister Esther made upon those with whom she was associated in the work is expressed very well by the late Mrs. C. E. Drought, mother of our present Chaplain General:

It was in 1889 that we first met Sister Esther, when Canon (then the Reverend C. E.) Drought and I arrived from England, and were working with Canon Handfield in St. Peter's Parish. The immediate impression she made upon us was of her exceptional enthusiasm. We felt that her marvellous energy and high spirit, her clear, definite Church teaching, her power of organisation and leadership, remarkably fitted her to found a great work. She came at the right time to the right place.

One great gift was her power to inspire others to work with her. She could not bear publicity, and ignored the frequent advice to advertise more the work of the Mission. She asked Canon Drought once for a motto, and he gave her that of the first Women's Guild in England—a very ancient one—'In Labore Quies', and one felt it was her guiding motto.

Unfortunately, some of the Clergy and leading church-people for many years 'suffered' her, but not gladly. This attitude often delayed and hampered her plans, but she had great help and encouragement from many church-people who realised the need in Mel-

bourne of women devoted to the Religious Life. She never allowed herself to feel beaten, and her keen sense of fun carried her through many discouragements. Some did not realise her love of fun, and did not understand her very decided ways, and her absolutely downright speech, and so did not feel as much at ease with her as they might have done. We always found it easy to reach the humorous side of her character, and had merry laughs with her over trifling vexations.

Sister Esther's industry was enormous. I remember that Mr. Drought had worked hard with her a whole day in the alleys and by-ways where wickedness abounded, and afterwards through a particularly tiring evening at the old Mission Hall. Next day he said to her (and to Sister Ellen and Sister Christina), 'I know by myself now how tired you must be!' 'Oh, we do not notice it', was the reply; 'you see we live tired.'

We cannot but rejoice that in the character of our Mother Foundress there was this gaiety, this true Franciscan light-heartedness, which enabled her in all her trials to wrest the weapon from the adversary's hand and use it against him with a laugh and jest. We see, therefore, this little band, 'grim and gay', bearing the burden of constant fatigue and triumphing over it by the grace of Him to Whom they are pledged. Here is one of the authentic notes of the Religious Life, part of that 'hard and difficult way' which its members have chosen to tread that they might be near Him who gave Himself to the uttermost; and who thus have the supreme content, the well-nigh lyrical joy, of being united to Him in

the experiences of His earthly life. 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.'

A photograph taken on June 6th, 1889, shows us the first three Sisters, in serge habits belted at the waist, stiffly starched collars and cuffs, and caps beneath which the hair was tightly drawn back.

English to the backbone, trained in an English Novitiate, and having absorbed the somewhat austere teaching of the Tractarians, Sister Esther was able to adapt herself in a most remarkable way to the country of her adoption. All through her life she exhibited an exquisite balance between the restraints of the Religious Life and the liberty of spirit into which its discipline admits us. Her sense of humour showed her the absurdity of an unreal religiosity, and her deep reverence for the Majesty of God taught her that He is worshipped more worthily by the dedication of the whole being—purified by grace—than by the encrustation of superficialities.

Opportunities of service were not far to seek in the Melbourne of sixty years ago. Utter, grinding poverty was a commonplace, and much of the Sisters' time was occupied in ministering to the bodily needs of the poor. Sometimes the Sisters would return from their visiting to find that Sister Esther had eight or nine people in the Mission Room, attending to their broken heads, or sore legs or fingers, giving them some medicine or advice to relieve a pain, fancied or otherwise. There was still but this one large room which had to be used for everything—mission services, classes, meetings, curing souls, mending broken hearts and heads, feeding the hungry, and also as the Sisters' own dining room and community room. For this latter purpose, some little privacy was secured by the provision of a large screen at one end. A few steps in one corner led

up to what had been the baker's oven, and this tiny recess was adapted later as an office for Sister Esther.

The famous Soup Kitchen was begun in 1890, and continued through many succeeding winters. Bishop Goe's kind heart was touched by the widespread distress, and he was anxious that the Sisters should undertake relief work on as large a scale as possible. A meeting was called and a roster of helpers prepared, and the Relief Fund which was to be so generously subscribed was opened by the Bishop's donation of £10. There was much to be done; four 18-gallon boilers were purchased, spoons and bowls bought, bread ordered—a special small-size loaf for convenient distribution—and the materials for the soup had to be bought and prepared. Reading of the hundreds fed, this latter is seen to be no small task. Years afterwards one of the Sisters recalled how unenthusiastic she was about the 4 a.m. rising—made necessary by the early morning visit to the Victoria Market. On the first day the Bishop and Mrs. Goe called to see how the scheme was working, and helped to ladle the soup.

That day two hundred men were fed. They entered the front door and left by the back, and it became necessary to have a policeman stationed at each to make sure that no one did the round trip and entered a second time. The 'jug department' was popular with the women and children, who seldom ate with the men but came with bedroom ewers and and 'billy-cans' for their share. Day by day the numbers increased: 350, 400, 470; when 500 came they could have but one bowlful apiece, and more bowls were bought to lighten the strain on the dish-washers. The Day Book preserves the names of faithful and enthusiastic helpers, among whom 'the young gentlemen from Trinity College' were well to the fore. About fifty dozen small loaves were distributed daily at the

height of the soup season, but as the weather became less rigorous the numbers gradually declined until we read of 'only 200, our smallest number since we began'.

Perhaps it is not without significance that the cry now sounds for more space for the Mission services. Lantern slides as a means of teaching the Faith were introduced on Good Friday, 1891. After this the lantern was used frequently; the congregations on such occasions sometimes extended half-way across the street. Little has been said as yet about these services in which the Church was taken to the people, and which were memorable, not only to those of the streets and lanes but also to those who felt themselves privileged in ministering to them. The first Sunday evening Mission Service was held at the beginning of October, 1888. When no priest was available, Mr. Pearce, the Superintendent of St. Peter's Sunday School, conducted the service and gave the address. He had a good voice and could lead the singing while Sister Esther played the harmonium. 'It was a sad collection of derelicts we gathered in,' said one who helped the Sisters in those days, 'and they were not always a well-behaved lot, at first, but gradually things shaped for better order.'

Searching the Day Books for information about these services, one early comes upon a startling note: 'small congregation because of the murder next door'. The laconic statement leaves one to conjecture whether the usual devotees are avoiding the neighbourhood from a natural reluctance to provide the next corpse, or whether, ghoul-like, they find a greater attraction in viewing the spot where the body was seen to lie. Nevertheless, among the few present is one who wished to speak to 'the minister', expressing a desire to lead a new life. Having thus committed himself, he is not allowed to slip easily out of the net, and there are many further references to

this man. The records, not without a certain dry humour, show the fluctuations in attendance: 'Mr. McKie* preached, one of the most successful services yet held, very good congregation.' 'Poor congregation because of the weather and the Salvation Army.' 'Very good congregation: Canon Handfield said Evensong.' In 1890 an eight days' Mission was held, at which the preachers were: the Bishop, Canon Handfield, Mr. Drought, Mr. Stretch and Mr. Hughes. The Bishop showed his keen interest by coming many times to preach at the Mission Services, and on these occasions there was always a large attendance, with every available seat filled.

Various alarms and excursions lent piquancy to the services, but sometimes the note deepened into tragedy, as when those on the outskirts of a street row rushed in to say there was a murder being done, and the service had to be postponed while the Sisters ministered to the wounded and helped them to hospital, and the police carried off their assailants to gaol.

It was in 1891 that the Sisters began work amongst the women prisoners in the Melbourne Gaol, and thereafter Tuesdays were set apart for visiting the sick in the hospital of the gaol, and for 'corridor visiting', that is, to those in solitary confinement. Here were scenes of sadness and despair in plenty, darkening to deepest tragedy in the condemned cell where some poor soul was waiting to pay the penalty for a great crime. What a poignant moment when a Sister received a baby from the arms of a mother about to die a shameful death. What an unforgettable scene, what a contrast between death and life—the woman going out to die, the babe being carried away to be gathered into the arms of Mother Church in Holy Baptism. Sometimes young girls were encountered who were serving sentences for infanticide. Left to face a great crisis alone, when

* Father of the Right Reverend J. D. McKie, Bishop of Geelong.

but hardly more than children themselves, they had become half-demented through pain and fear and bewilderment. Now they were suffering detention during the Governor's pleasure, a sentence which might have been passed more fittingly on those who had brought them to this, the callously irresponsible father of the child and the coldly self-righteous folk who had turned them out when their plight was known. To such girls the visits of the Sisters came as rays of light and hope, and it was a matter for great rejoicing to Sister Esther that when the House of Mercy was built the sentences of some of the younger ones were commuted, and the girls passed altogether into the Sisters' care. The old hands had glib stories to account for their reappearance, perhaps after the Sisters had tried to help them to better things. 'Look, Sister, I'll tell you. I was just putting my hat straight in front of a glass in Bourke Street, and I felt a hand on my shoulder. The next thing I find myself here.' Another was reading her Bible under the light of a street lamp, when she was taken up.

Visits were paid to the Pentridge Stockade, and when the new Female Penitentiary was occupied in May, 1894, the Sisters were appointed official visitors. One of the privileges was to see the prisoners alone in their cells without the presence of a wardress, an arrangement which enabled the prisoner to speak freely without the embarrassment of a third person. The Matron, Mrs. Henderson, showed the Sisters every kindness and always entertained them with some refreshment for their week-day visits, and thus they were able to spend the greater part of both morning and afternoon with the prisoners. The old cable and horse-drawn trams made the journey slow and tiring, and the demands of such a day must have been very great and exacting to both body and spirit,

especially when the temperature stood at 109 degrees, as we read sometimes.

The first Sunday class for religious instruction was held in June, 1893, and scarcely a Sunday has been missed since then. It was our Mother who went to the Inspector General and asked if a chapel could be included in the new buildings at Pentridge, and the result was the present building, which is used by Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The ornaments were chosen by the Mother, and the altar frontals and linen were made and embroidered by the Sisters. An associate tells of the making of a red and gold super-frontal while she was staying at a holiday resort. The other guests were interested on hearing that it was for the chapel at Pentridge, but a little puzzled about the use to which it would be put, and about the trouble which was being expended to make it beautiful. Inevitably the question came: 'Are they High or Low at the Gaol?' An old gentleman came from behind his newspaper to say, succintly, 'Low, I should think.'

The Sunday afternoon service was a simple one of prayers and hymns followed by an instruction, and any who wished could speak to the Sister afterwards. In Holy Week lantern slides of the Life and Passion of Our Lord were shown. For many years the Mother herself took this service, having chosen the slides with great care, and listed them in a note book with thoughts appropriate to each. The 'Story of the Cross' was sung at this service, and the prisoners would sing, with much feeling for local colour:

O, I will follow Thee, Star of my soul,
Through the deep shades of night to the *Gaol*.

Frequently Associates and other friends would accompany the Mother or the Sister to help with the lantern, or with the organ—the Mother, of course, always played the organ

herself. Lady Steward (later Mrs. Norley Weekes), who as a girl was very beautiful and dressed in good taste, was arranging with the Mother the details of her first visit to Pentridge. 'I will look out my plainest things,' she said, 'but I don't know whether they will be plain enough.' 'You will do nothing of the sort,' the Mother told her. 'Please wear your nicest clothes. They love to see pretty things, and this is their only opportunity.'

The nature of this work is such that it can be spoken of only with the utmost reserve, and the more successful it is, the greater becomes the need for discretion. Some of the women helped were involved in cases which were sordid in the extreme. Bishop Hart, writing at the time of the Mother's death, made guarded reference to such an one: 'In the early days I remember a case in the criminal courts which shocked Melbourne by its revelation of the depravity in our midst. It was Sister Esther who drew out of the slough a young woman who was in the centre of it.' Yes, drew her out of the mire, and set her feet upon the rock, for after she had been hidden and helped for several years, she was able to take her place in the world as a useful member of society.

The following appreciation of the Sisters' work was received by the Mission Council, when, in 1903, Captain J. Evans, Inspector General in the Penal and Gaols Department, wrote:

> As one having knowledge of the intricacies and difficulties incidental to prison work, you will perhaps permit me, on relinquishing office as Inspector General, to express my high appreciation of the untiring, zealous and tactful way in which the Sisters have laboured among the female prisoners. When the present system of allowing selected ladies the free

> run of the prisons was initiated, there was an impression (in which neither I nor Mrs. Henderson shared) that discipline would be ruined. Nothing of the kind has been the result, in fact, the contrary. May I earnestly express a hope that the Church will on no account relax its efforts in this channel. Zeal alone on the part of the workers is not sufficient, and may be harmful unless tempered by discretion. Perhaps His Lordship will, when he has time to spare, inquire into our system both for men and women.

The 'Associates' to whom reference has been made were ladies pledged to help forward the work 'by prayer, sympathy, and such material assistance as is in their power'. They were formed into a body by the admission of their first nine members at a service in St. Peter's Church on Ascension Day, 1891. There were about forty Associates six years later, that is, at the time when Mrs. Moorhoose became a member in Bishopscourt Chapel at Manchester, the form of admission and the Associate's badge having been sent from Melbourne for the occasion. Canon Handfield often commended their work, and never more happily than when at a public meeting he said—"The old toast used to be: 'The Navy, the Army, and the Auxiliaries.' All honour to the Auxiliaries." Fifty years later we can echo his words with heartfelt gratitude.

Chapter IV.

THE FIRST BRANCH HOUSES.

'She considereth a field, and buyeth it;
With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.'

The House of Mercy and the Children's Home were indeed Branch Houses, growing directly out of the parent stem of the Mission. Until these houses were built, the Sisters had great difficulty in finding places to receive the women and girls whom they were rescuing from immoral lives, and neglected children whom they found in the streets or who were brought to them by the police.

Again and again the Sisters were obliged to journey to Geelong in order to place girls and women in the Refuge there. Others were taken to the Magdalen Asylum, to the Roman Catholic Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Great courtesy was shown by the authorities of the various Refuges, who never refused us if they had a bed, but it was a grief to Sister Esther that she could not gather these poor outcasts into her own care.

The Chaplain and the Council of the Mission were impressed with the necessity of providing a 'Country Home' for them, and in 1889 this project was brought forward in the Annual Report of the work. A fund was opened with a cheque for £200, part of a bequest by Miss C. Woods to Sister Ellen for distribution among charitable and religious institutions, and the Council voiced the modest hope that the work of the Mission had commended itself so far to the members of the Church that an appeal to raise the money required would not be in vain.

The money was subscribed but slowly. As soon as sufficient was in hand, land was purchased at Cheltenham, eight acres partly planted with fruit trees, a good paddock for grazing, and space for building. The year 1891 had nearly closed before the building began to rise, one wing only, at the cost of £1,422, with accommodation for two Sisters and twelve women. To the Sisters it seemed a daring and ambitious project, and Sister Esther was everywhere buying what was necessary at the lowest cost possible.

On the 15th June, 1892, the Countess of Hopetoun, accompanied by His Excellency the Governor, made the journey from town to declare the House open. Described as 'a handsom and convenient building, sufficient for present needs and capable of enlargement', the house was free of debt and the collection taken among the three hundred visitors could be devoted to a maintenance fund. After prayers by the Chaplain, the Bishop of Melbourne spoke, and then Lady Hopetoun. Proceedings were 'enlivened' we are told, by the beautiful singing of the Cathedral choir-boys, who took part also in the dedication service earlier in the day when the Sisters—the brave and few—with their Chaplain and some members of the Council, assembled in the temporary chapel to beseech the blessing of God upon their House of Mercy. 'Very sweet did the words of the Psalm of thanksgiving sound as the fresh young voices chanted them through the empty rooms and passages of the house, which we trust may prove a home of rest and safety to many a weary and sin-laden soul.'

Soon eleven girls and women were in residence. Sister Christina was placed in charge, where for forty-four years she was to hold sway. Her shrewd but kindly judgment, her tolerance for all but cruelty, her delicious humour and wide unfailing interest; above all her amazing belief in her girls,

created an atmosphere of love and happiness in which 'being good' became an easy and lightsome thing to many of those who passed through her hands.

The Reverend 'Jack' Stretch was appointed Chaplain to the Home, and the year after the house was opened he was able to present four candidates at a Confirmation at St. George's Church, Malvern. This was the first of those confirmations which became a yearly, sometimes a bi-yearly event, and which were held in the chapel of the Home after its enlargement in '95. But these were the first fruits, and surely they were sweet to those who had toiled, and prayed, and spared not of their best that they might bring these tributes to the Lord of the harvest.

Through Mrs. Bowen's gift of £1,500 from the Aubrey Bowen Bequest the chapel was built and the house enlarged to accommodate twenty-one girls. The Dedication Service was held on November 19th, 1895. In the absence of the Warden through illness, Canon Godby, then Chaplain of the House of Mercy, officiated, and was assisted by the Reverend J. C. Love, the Sisters' Chaplain. At the gathering afterwards the Bishop commended the work to the liberality of the large number of guests. The beautiful reredos in the Chapel was the gift of Mr. George Porter. It had been brought to Australia as part of the mosaics intended for the reredos of St. Paul's Cathedral, but the original design having been superseded by another, this benefactor of the Cathedral Church, was pleased thus to adorn the little chapel of St. Mary. Panels depicting the four Evangelists, after old German art, were the work and gift of Mr. R. G. Hyndman, the architect.

In the succession of faithful Chaplains, two, Dean Godby and Canon Snodgrass, stand out both for their length of service, and because they combined the office with that of Warden

of the Community. Between the Mother Foundress and Canon Snodgrass there existed a beautiful confidence and understanding, and as her years declined she leaned on him more and more. In season and out of season, he was tireless in his endeavours to commend the Sisters' work and secure its support. Canon Snodgrass died suddenly and peacefully on St. Thomas' Day, 1929. When the gracious presence of their Chaplain was removed, the girls lost one who had spared not his strength and time, but gave freely of them both in spiritual ministrations and in fatherly interest and encouragement. In his memory Mrs. Snodgrass instituted the 'Canon Evelyn Snodgress prizes', 'for improvement' and 'for perseverence'. These were awarded annually at Christmas time, usually on the night of the Nativity Play, the institution of which, as an annual event, had given him keen satisfaction.

'Not so much by instruction', Canon Snodgress had said, 'as by the example of holy lives.' Those who labour to win souls to God know the truth of this, that not what they say but what they are weighs in the scales where is poised, perhaps in some momentous decision, the future of one of God's children. Nevertheless, the instruction is important too, and when seen to be in harmony with the life it can be used by God to rouse, convict, inspire, and strengthen.

Week by week for many years the girls heard one of the Mother's addresses in chapel. If unable to give it in person, this 'sermon' was despatched to Sister Christina, who delivered it in her own inimitable way, not without certain interpolations, at times. Had there been the slightest suggestion of cruelty to animals or birds, the topical reference became most stirring. Tired of the 'mess', some of the house-maids had pulled down the nests the swallows had built over the chapel bell in the cloister, in the front porch, and in the upper

corridors. By one of those coincidences with which we are familiar, the Mother's address on the following Sunday dealt with the eighty-fourth psalm. The atmosphere was electric and young hearts felt convicted of sin as Sister told of the sparrow finding her house and the swallow a place for her young. Manuscript discarded, spectacles pushed aside, voice shaking with earnestness, Sister leans from her stall; 'This is God's house, and the birds have as much right to come to it as you have. Wicked girls!'

From one of the Mother Foundress' little black note-books we take this address, given on the 12th November, 1904, on the eve of a First Communion day. We might call it

'The Guest House,

or

Taking in Lodgers.'

In one of his Epistles (2 Cor. v.1) St. Paul likens our bodies to houses.

As we go about Melbourne we see streets and streets of houses, some of which are empty, for they bear a notice, 'To Let,' or 'Lodgers Taken,' or 'Apartments to Let.' Now here is a strange thing: we each have a house, and we can't have it all to ourselves. We must take lodgers. Some lodgers never pay rent; they come, and the owner of the house welcomes them, only to find that he has been robbed when they do 'a moonlight flitting.' Bad lodgers never pay, for they spoil the house, tear the paper on the walls, break windows, take the gloss off every thing.

One very bad lodger is Temper; that very soon spoils the good looks of our house. We can tell by people's mouths if that lodger is within. You know, we are born with our noses, but our mouths we make ourselves. This lodger ruins our peace of mind; makes people miserable. What will not people do in a temper! Impurity, bad language, rudeness—these are all bad lodgers, and remember! Bad lodgers drive good ones away, for

Love cannot live with hatred and envy,
Gentleness cannot live with roughness,
Meekness cannot live with pride,
Purity cannot live with filthiness.

The best of all lodgers is Love, for love brings other good lodgers in. Love begets love—love to God, love to each other. It takes so much room there is no place for the bad lodgers, so our houses grow to be a little more like the palace we want to copy, i.e., we grow more like to God's image. Another good lodger is Gentleness, for it keeps away rough lodgers; loud talking, swearing and the temptations which come when one girl aggravates another. Goodness pays well; so does Truthfulness. Think what it means to be trusted. We like that, and we don't like that it should be said of us, 'You can't believe a word she says'. Temperance pays well—self-control as it is sometimes called. It wins respect, respect of others, and that good thing, self-respect.

But bad lodgers are very difficult to get rid of; given notice they will not go. You try over and over again, and these bad tempers and cross tongues

are still there. You must go on trying, with God's help, for some of you are expecting a great and wonderful Visitor. You know that if you were married and had your own home and Sister Christina were coming to see you, how you would prepare, and make all clean, send the bad lodgers away. But now it is Jesus Christ who is coming to visit you in the Blessed Sacrament. The night before He was crucified, He gave that gift to His disciples: This is My Body; This is My Blood. And they thought of something He had said to them before, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him.'

What a preparation we must make for so great a Visitor! There must be no bad lodgers when He comes, no dirt or dust. So some of you have knelt down in this Chapel and told God before His priest all your sins one by one, and you know when you hear that 'I absolve thee', that all those stains are washed in the Precious Blood of Jesus, and the house of your soul is holy and clean. After Holy Communion you will be able to sing:

Jesu, gentlest Saviour,
God of might and power,
Thou Thyself art dwelling
In us at this hour.

Then all our good lodgers will rejoice that He has come to fill our whole being. So let us welcome Him, especially with love: love to Jesus: love to each other.

As we have said, the circumstances which led to the establishment of a Home for children were similar to those which brought the House of Mercy into existence. The Mission work in the city had developed, and more and more friendless and uncared-for children were met with by the Sisters. Sister Esther had been authorised 'to take charge of and apprehend children, to be dealt with according to the Neglected Children's Act'. But what to do with the children when we had them? As the Inspector of Charities in his report of 1891 said: 'Until the Church of England provides the necessary accommodation for such children, the proceedings under the Act must necessarily be very limited.' Some of these waifs and strays were boarded with good women known to the Sisters, but that system was too expensive for more than a few, and most of them were taken to homes belonging to the different denominations. Sister Esther felt very strongly that the Church should care for her own little ones, and not hand them over to other guardians to be trained in ways not of her choosing.

When we consider the instant response nowadays to the appeal of helpless, unwanted children, it can hardly be credited that three years had to elapse before the churchmen of the day were roused to make the first small contributions to this charity. Government officials tried to prod church-people into recognition of the need, and when Canon Handfield brought the matter before the Bishop in Council, in 1892, he referred to a letter from Mr. Brett, Inspector of Charities, in which he said, 'that the Church of England would soon cease to have any members among the poorer classes if it allowed the neglected children to pass out of its hands.' From the same source there came, the following year, a report which said: 'Seeing, therefore, what has been accomplished in this direction

(i.e., at the House of Mercy), I am hopeful of efforts being made to secure for the children advantages of a like kind. The Church of England is reasonably expected to take her fair share of the work in the interests of neglected children.'

Early in 1894 a Scotch lady travelling in Australia called to see Sister Esther. 'I hear you want to start a Children's Home,' she said, and gave her a hundred golden sovereigns. The next day she called with a hundred more. Now something could be done, and a committee was formed to launch a strong appeal. Sister Esther, confident that the way would open, had been inspecting houses as they fell vacant at Kew, Malvern, South Yarra and Brighton. In this last-named suburb a house was rented, and on the 7th of June the Bishop opened it as a Home for Neglected Children. Canon Handfield, the Reverend C. J. Godby, and Mr. Charles Pearce, Secretary of the Committee, addressed those present on the need of increased support. Sister Ellen, who had given such wonderful service to the sick poor of the streets and lanes, entered upon this new charge, appropriately enough, on the Feast of St. Barnabas, ready to receive the first child, a little nameless boy, on June 12th.

In 1897 a legacy of £1,000 was received from the Dr. Aubrey Bowen bequest, and land was bought nearby as the site for a permanent home.

By December the new house was ready for occupation, and the opening ceremony was performed by Lady Brassey on the second day of the month. The Dedication Service was reserved until Holy Innocents' Day, the chapel being named after the infant martyrs. A long and narrow and somewhat featureless room was given more character by the addition of a new sanctuary built in memory of Sister Ellen after her death in 1902. The Home provided plenty of room and ventilation

—'sometimes, we fear, too much of the latter,' said the 'In Our Midst' of the time—a sentiment echoed by the succession of workers who have shivered in the draughty passages. Five dormitories were designed to take forty children in all, though that number was often exceeded, and the new schoolroom enabled all the children to be taught in the Home, an arrangement which prevailed until 1910, when they were sent to the State School.

Little boys up to the age of seven years, and girls between the ages of two and fifteen years, were taken into the Home. Quaint little mites they look, in their befrilled pinafores and button boots, or dressed for an outing in prim little frocks and immense sailor hats, the smaller children winsome in fur-trimmed bonnets and many-caped pelisses. How they were loved, with a yearning desire to make up to them for all they had missed of care and wise affection. The Mother herself knew each one intimately, and seemed always to be contriving something for their good.

From the first it was hoped that the cause of neglected children would make a wide appeal, and particularly that schools, Sunday schools, and other groups of young people would give generously to the support of the Home. That indeed came to be so, but few realised what work was entailed in making the need known. Tirelessly, Sister Esther visited the suburban and country parishes to speak to the various groups and societies, pleading for the very poor and that little children be saved from the untimely deaths which were the result of undernourishment and want of care. Pictures of the work in its various aspects were made into lantern slides, and these were shown wherever permission to do so could be won. 'O Lord, we pray Thee to watch over and keep from evil the lambs of Thy flock committed to our care.' Memory recalls

the yearning note in the Mother's voice as she offered the customary intercession, and she planned, and worked, and often wore herself out that the children might have all that was requisite for their well-being.

A visitor from England who accompanied the Mother Foundress on a visit to the Children's Home in the early days, recalls how the children ran eagerly to meet her, with glad shouts of 'Mother! Mother!' and how touching it was to see the Mother's pride and joy as she gathered the little ones to her, exclaiming over the improvement in their looks or their speech, chuckling over their oddities, noticing everything, remembering everything; then later recounting some of their sad little histories, as well as happier stories of the brighter days since their reception into the home.

It has been said of our Mother Foundress that some of the qualities which we regard as characteristic of the male were super-added to her womanly nature, and this is seen in her chivalrous defence of the weak and her anger towards cruelty and injustice. The first steps towards the foundation in Victoria of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children were taken in 1896, when Lady Brassey requested Sister Esther to call upon her at Government House to discuss the matter. Before this, Sister Esther had been anticipating that Society's useful work in the journeys she made to the various suburbs to lay information against cruel and neglectful parents, to collect sweating statistics (and this was in 1895 for all its modern sound), to wrest a family of children from some unworthy woman who had undertaken their care for the sake of gain. How they must have hated her, this indomitable woman in the Sister's habit, so small of stature, so inflexible of will, the bane of evil-doers whose cupidity and self-indulgence caused suffering to innocent children.

For many years the Sisters at Brighton looked longingly across the dividing fence at the house which stood empty next door. Although it was known as 'the Haunted House', it seemed to be just what was wanted for a Babies' Home. The owner would not consider any application to sell or let the house, but with her death the property came on to the market. It was proposed before this to build a small house for babies and toddlers at the rear of the Children's Home, on ground which had been given for the purpose, and the Committee caring for the building fund had in hand a sum of money nearly sufficient to purchase the coveted house. The balance was raised with all speed, the house bought, and after the necessary renovations it was furnished for thirty babies. The house was opened on the 2nd September, 1916. Many little ones who were boarded out pending this event were received into the home, which was soon full. It was a pretty sight to see the babies playing and tumbling on the lawns, or valiantly climbing the stairs on their way to bed. The happy parties on Holy Innocents' Day received an added brightness from the presence of a group of crowing babies stretching out their little arms to the gay Christmas Tree.

Most of the babies who were brought to the Sisters' care were ill-nourished, weak and ailing, a ready prey for any illness which might attack them before sufficient time had enabled them to be nursed into health and strength. Not many years had passed when those whose duty it was to watch for the babies' well-being began to wonder if the air at Brighton, so health-giving for children of normal strength, were not too bracing and vigorous for those thus handicapped. When the medical men recommended a change of air, a house was sought in a warmer, inland suburb. In March, 1927, a public appeal for £10,000 was brought to a successful result under the

organisation of Mr. Alex. Wettenhall, and 'Yarrayne', a beautiful house in Lower Malvern Road, Darling, was purchased. On the 11th October in that year the chapel and house were dedicated by the Archbishop to the glory of God and the service of His little ones. It was a beautiful spring day; seven hundred friends assembled for the occasion, and listened to the delightful speech in which Lady Somers declared the Home open. Housing thirty-six babies, these were spoken of, inevitably, as 'the Darling Babies'. When the remainder of the estate was divided and sold, the stable buildings were added to the Babies' Home property, to serve as hospital and isolation ward.

No sooner were the babies at Darling, than nine girls from the Children's Home moved into the house vacated by them, now partly furnished as a Hostel. Some of these girls were already at work, and the Children's Home Committte and other friends rallied round to complete the furnishings, and the 'Fairy Godfather', for many years an anonymous bestower of treats for the children, now generously met the cost of encasing the balcony with sliding glass shutters to make it fit for a sleeping-out place. This enabled the big dormitories to be turned into dressing-rooms.

With the establishment of the Hostel and the rapid increase in the number of inmates, it became impossible to find room in the chapel for everyone. The time was ripe for another dream to come true. For years the Sisters had seen visions of a chapel, especially built for a sanctuary, in place of the room which had been used for that purpose. Not that the latter lacked any necessity for reverent worship; it did not, and many hallowed associations had endeared it to those who used it; but it was not built for the purpose, and a room, however well adapted, must always lack the harmonious symbolism of the

well-planned House of God. A building fund had been opened by a donation of £3 from the St. Andrew's branch of the Girls' Friendly Society, and the children of the Home, by their first physical culture display, had raised the next amount, the sum of £17. This had been added to over the years by gifts from various friends, and now it was felt that the work could be put in hand. Mr. Louis Williams was reminded of his promise to design the chapel, and work was begun early in 1929.

By August all was ready; debts paid, furnishings and ornaments betokening the thought of many loving friends, were in place, and the day of consecration fixed for the 20th. The consecrating Bishop was the Right Reverend Reginald Stephen, whose long friendship and association with the Community included the dedication of the smaller chapel while he was Vicar of the parish church of St. Andrew. The following description of the chapel is condensed from an article in the 'Church Standard' at that time:

> The Community of the Holy Name and the Home for Children in particular are to be warmly congratulated on the possession of a chapel which is quite a gem. This building will be looked upon as one of the best that Mr. Louis Williams has designed. The proportions are very pleasing, the rose window in the east end most beautiful, and there is a grace and dignity about the whole thing which is appealing. The furnishings are in the best taste, and one can perceive love, devotion and true artistry in all the arrangements. What a triumph for the Sisters to have such a noble chapel. The Mother and the Sisters received many warm expressions of congratulation. To the Sister who is in charge of the

Home and who has sponsored the chapel fund, it was a moment of supreme joy and happiness.

It is not suitable, and it would be the last thing the donors would wish, that a chronicle such as this should be turned into a list of gifts and subscriptions. 'They gave beauty to the fame of a holy work, therefore their memorial is blessed for ever.' Yet two hallowed memories enshrined in the chapel may be recorded, for they link the consecrated devotion of the beginning of the work with the present and ever-renewed aspirations of those who worship in this lovely place. A small tablet within the sanctuary carries the legend: 'To the Glory of God and in memory of Sister Ellen this Sanctuary is built.' The children's stalls were placed in the chapel 'In memory of Laurence Oldfield, once a child in this Home, who died on a battlefield in France on June 26th, 1916, aged 24 years. R.I.P.'

The building of this chapel made it possible to hold Retreats for women and girls, and Quiet Days for various groups of men and women. Those who had crowded into the tiny chapel at the Mission House for days of prayer and quiet could appreciate the spaciousness and beauty of this lovely shrine set amid splendid trees, with all the busy, friendly life of the houses for girls and children on either side.

Many of the priests who have served in the capacity of Chaplain accepted that office during their incumbency of the parish of St. Andrew's, Brighton, a church which can boast many illustrious names amongst its parish priests. One who will be associated always with the life of these Homes and the devotion of the chapel is the Ven. Archdeacon Hancock, who became Chaplain in 1923. It was cause for mutual joy that his chaplaincy did not terminate with his resignation from the parish church, but was retained even during the strenuous years

when he was Archdeacon of Melbourne, and, later while administrator of the diocese after the death of Archbishop Lees. Filling the office of Warden for two separate terms, the Archdeacon became conversant with the wide and varied problems of the Community and the Mission, but it is safe to say that the core of his heart was given always to the Homes at Brighton. A wise and loving friend to all who have lived there, each child as she came to us was taken into her fatherly care and interest, and upheld by his faithful prayers. The aspirations and the needs of all are gathered into those deeply spiritual and loving intentions offered at the altar, week by week, where still it is his joy and our privilege that he should minister.

Chapter V.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORK.

'She spreadeth out her hand to the poor;
Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.'

The year 1894 brought a great expansion of the work in the city through the acquisition of the building which became known as St. George's Mission Hall. Once a factory, and at another time a dance hall of the worst kind, there was little difficulty in adapting this large and airy building to its new purposes. The sanctuary was screened by curtains which could be withdrawn for services, and cupboards around the walls held the paraphernalia for the various clubs and classes. Two small rooms near the street were known as the vestry and the dispensary, respectively, but they served many more purposes than their names suggested. The rent of the hall was paid for many years by an Associate, but when there was danger of its passing out of our hands the building was bought by the Council of the Mission.

The opening of the Hall (April, 1894) gave space for those activities which had become cramped in the Mission Room in Little Lonsdale Street, and opened further avenues of service. (Now, too, for the first time since their work began, the Sisters were able to enjoy the unspeakable comfort of a little privacy and rest in a room of their own, without constant interruption.) It has been implied, rather than stated, that much of the Sisters' work in those early years lay in nursing the sick poor. The public hospital system was unlike that of to-day. None could be received as an in-patient,

or be given medical help as an out-patient, unless they brought a form of recommendation from a subscriber or a well-known citizen. Casualties were furnished with a special ticket which was good for one day only. In the first appeal for help for the Mission work, well-wishers were besought to provide the Sisters with 'hospital orders' and letters of recommendation which could be used by the Sisters at their discretion. The poor and the outcast in the district around the Mission House had few among their acquaintances who could be termed 'well-known' in any desirable sense, and but for the Sisters' ministry many would have languished in their beds, unvisited and untended. The Sisters became known, not only as the binders-up of cuts and wounds of all descriptions, but as regular attendants on the sick and the dying. By day and by night, alone, or piloting the doctor through the maze of courts and lanes with which they became so familiar, the Sisters went forth on their errands of mercy. Now the additional space at the Mission Hall made it possible to extend this healing work.

One of the smaller rooms adjoining the Hall was furnished with a high couch, which the Mission folk, with their passion for drama, always called 'the operating table' (and indeed it was used for minor operations on children). The well-stocked drug cupboard was filled, in the first place, by the firms of wholesale druggists of whom the Mother begged help for this venture. As need arose for the replenishment of such stocks the bills were met by the proceeds of the jumble sales held in the Hall. Here, the week after the dedication of the Hall, the first Free Dispensary was held, and thereafter every Friday afternoon. Dr. Dunbar Hooper attended to examine the patients, and the Mother, or later, Sister Agnes, dispensed his prescriptions. How kind he was to the sick poor, and how they loved him, and his jokes. He had plenty of fun out of

his patients, and so did the Sister attending them. 'I am Solomon's wife', said a velvet-eyed Syrian, announcing herself. 'Which one?' asked the Doctor quickly. 'Now I want you to have a bath,' he said to one patient. 'Oh, Doctor, I haven't had a bath for fourteen years.' One afternoon the doctor found that he had treated English, Irish, Scotch, German, French, Italian, Syrian, Greek and Chinese patients. Some of these could speak no language but their own and perhaps had provided themselves with an interpreter, but where there was such friendliness on both sides, and use could be made of expressive signs, matters could be managed very well even without the medium of a common tongue, and there were many hearty laughs to prove that goodwill needed no interpreter. How untiringly generous of their time and strength were these medical men, especially Dr. Hooper, Dr. McCreery, and Dr. Ward Farmer, not only in their attendance on Friday afternoons, but in their readiness to go at any hour of day or night to some poor hovel where a Sister had summoned them.

Answering a ring at the Mission House door one evening, a Sister had her hand seized and kissed by a swarthy Syrian hawker. Garlic seemed to fill the air as in broken English he spoke. 'Woman, babee, seeck. Come, see.' His home was a single room in a right-of-way at the back of Little Lonsdale Street. About ten people were in the room, the men smoking, so the first thing to be done was to turn them out, and open the window to improve the atmosphere. On the bed lay a beautiful woman, with oval face and pensive dark eyes, which lighted up at the sight of the Sister. Pointing to the babe, mummy-like in its swathings of bandages, she said, 'Veery seeck.' It was evident that medical skill was needed, so after tidying the room and feeding the woman, Sister Esther returned to the Mission and sought the doctor.

In preparation for his visit Sister set out once more, armed with a kettle of hot water, soap and towel, to wash the baby. But in that 'home' no washing bowl could be found. The Syrian hawker, standing by, offered a pie dish. Sister shook her head. 'Too small.' Then he produced a large frying-pan, and this, filled with water, became the baby's first bath-tub. Cries of 'Hakim, Hakim,' announced the doctor's approach. 'Well, Sister, and what is the trouble?' In answer to his query a weak voice comes from the bed: 'Veery seeck. Too seeck.' The doctor knows two Syrian phrases, of which he is very proud. 'Where is the pain,' and 'Put out your tongue.' Smiles wreath the faces of the parents as he takes the brown baby in his strong hands, and says that it will soon be well. Torrents of Arabic benedictions are poured on his head, and he hurries away, as if fearful of an embrace. His other patients are more lucrative (one hopes), but they could not be more grateful than these strangers from Mt. Lebanon.

Amongst the small group of Italians with whom the Sisters were in touch was an organ-grinder who had for the Mother a deep love and respect. Apparently a man of good family, he had been a follower of Garibaldi, and had stirring tales to tell of those days. Whenever he met the Mother in the street he would ask permission to walk beside her to the Mission House. At his death his savings were bequeathed to the Mother, and the Eucharistic candle-sticks 'In memory of H.J.H.' were purchased and have been used in the chapel at the Mission House ever since.

Here is the story of 'Wag', told in his own words:

> I was a little chap of six or seven, and used to run barefoot about the streets, ready for any mischief. Whenever I passed the Mission House I would throw stones on the roof, or ring the door-bell. It was

high out of my reach but I would jump for the iron grating (grille) of the door, and holding to that with one hand I could ring the bell with the other. Then down the street for all I was worth, or from a safe corner turn and pull faces at the Sister who came to the door. One day a number of big boys rushed after me and brought me back through that very door. Now what would they do to me? They held what they called a court-martial, and I was sentenced to wash myself. That didn't take long, and I was standing on my head in the dish when a Sister came in. She set me on a form in the great long room, and I was given bread and jam and a cup of tea while Sister Esther talked to me. Wouldn't I like to come to Sunday School, and the Mission services, and learn how to be clean, and to behave myself, and perhaps sing in the choir? Yes, I would like that all right, so Sister Agnes came to see where I lived and to arrange it with my mother and step-father. They didn't care what I did if I were out of their way. Of course, I hadn't any clothes, but the Sisters rigged me out in everything I needed.

Not long after this there came the Gold Rush to the West; my stepfather and brothers went to Kalgoorlie, and my mother with them. They didn't know what to do with me, and the Sisters offered to look after me entirely. I was allowed to choose, and I chose to stay with the Sisters, and they paid for my board with Mrs. Norton, in Nicholson Street. Every morning I came to the Mission House, to go to St. Peter's School with Sister Agnes. 'How are your socks?' she would ask, and though

I would protest that they were 'all right', I would have to sit on the back steps and wash my feet and put on clean socks. The Sisters were very particular about my bath, that I should wash properly. On Mondays I used to rush to the Mission House after school, for a cup of tea and a bun at the Mothers' Meeting. Sister Agnes liked me to hand round the buns, and she always reminded me to hurry home and not to play football on the way. After Dispensary on Friday afternoons I earned my weekly pocket money by standing on my head for Dr. Dunbar Hooper. I did my home-work at the Mission House, Sister Agnes helping me. She was a wonderful teacher.

The choir-boys' teas on Sundays were great fun. We stayed on after Sunday School, and would gather around the fire while Sister Agnes read to us. I can remember those stories now, 'Mr. Midshipman Easy,' and other good yarns. We were so interested in them we could hardly wait for the next Sunday. Sister Agnes had all those boys eating out of her hand. She could manage them, and we always felt that nothing could go wrong when she was there, and that whatever she said was right and fair. I am afraid we gave a lot of trouble to the younger Sisters, or Novices, when they came to look after us for half an hour or so while Sister had a spell. We got up to all sorts of larks then, and would sometimes do the disappearing trick, racing around the 'Model School,' and hiding. The school had a wall ten or fifteen feet high, and I would run along the top while the Sister hurried after me below, begging me to be

careful, and to come down. Before service we had to wash ourselves, and brush our hair. Some of the boys would plaster their hair down with water, and when this trickled down where they had not washed, near their ears, they looked a picture. Some of those boys have grown into fine men. Jim was the best of us then, and has done the best for himself since, quite a public man, and much respected. He was our Cross-bearer at the Mission services, but I liked to think I could be trusted to take up the collection. Another of my jobs was to act as Sister Esther's messenger-boy. I posted her letters every night of the week.

For my holidays I went, sometimes, to Sister Agnes' friends at Williamstown, sometimes to the Children's Home at Brighton, or to the House of Mercy. I remember the present Children's Home being built. Baby Louise was my favourite there—she was such a little thing—and Laurence Oldfield. Laurence was a fine boy, and very clever; everyone was fond of him. At the House of Mercy I tried to teach Blind Minnie to play cricket, and offered to make a cricket pitch for her, but the Sisters didn't think it necessary for me to dig up the whole place in the doing of it. Sister Christina was wonderful to me, and didn't mind my wild ways. But the Mother and Sister Agnes were 'my' Sisters, and I belonged to them. I am afraid I imposed on them sometimes, and as I grew older they thought I should have a man over me. Sister Esther took me to Maldon, where she knew the priest, the Reverend Josiah Tyssen, and I was apprenticed to a black-

smith. I didn't like being away from town, and I thought the work was too hard, so after a while I ran away, and what a shock the Sisters had when I turned up at the Mission House again. I tried my hand at many things before settling down, and was out of touch with the Sisters for a while, so the Mother had another shock when she heard that I had become a professional boxer. But she was very proud of the fact that I had won several championships, and that I had not been knocked about or given 'cauliflower ears' like some of the other chaps. After I married, my wife persuaded me to give that up. I have always kept myself informed about the Sisters, and the extensions of their work; whenever their great motor-van passes my door I think of how I used to ride in the horse-drawn laundry-van, forty or fifty years ago. They were wonderful women, and some of us owe more to them than we can say.

The first Mission House was never anything but a tumbledown place, in need of frequent patching to hold it together. The earliest repairs of any consequence had been directed towards making the back of the premises weather-proof, and larger. A year later, in 1890, the front wall was rebuilt in part and three new windows were inserted, replacing the large shop window which had been used by the baker for trade purposes. A door which originally belonged to St. Paul's Church was given through the kindness of Mr. Henty.

These improvements had to suffice for many years during which the fabric of the interior became more and more dilapidated. Huge cracks appeared in the walls of the tiny bedrooms, and ominous creaks, cracks and falling masonry made life at the Mission House an exciting affair. Movements

within the walls caused cupboards to fall. Old iron and kerosene tins were applied to the roof in vain; still the Sisters wakened to find water dripping on their beds, or on their faces. The musty smell within joined forces with the reeking stable without, and altogether it was so damp and insanitary as seriously to threaten the Sisters' health. Fearing lest the whole place should come down in ruins over the Sisters, the Council of the Mission began to collect money for a more extensive rebuilding scheme, and early in 1899 the house was vacated while this work was put into operation.

From slum to palace. At the corner of Victoria and Rathdown Streets stood the Queen's Palace, and here in airy rooms on the second floor overlooking the Exhibition Gardens, the Sisters were housed for four months. From their windows they could see a tiny corner of the Mission House, its walls rising rapidly. On their visits to the premises the Sisters would hear the views of the inhabitants of Little Lonsdale Street, who thought the new house quite an ornament. One woman recounted the experience of a friend of hers in having a new house built; there was some dispute about it and the matter had to go before one whom she described as 'the Master of Iniquities'. Ruefully, the Sisters thought that the building of the new Mission was not likely to pass unnoticed by his Satanic Majesty.

The Bishop and Mrs. Goe paid an unofficial visit prior to the opening on the 9th May. A meeting was held at the Mission Hall on that day, and then about two hundred friends adjourned to Little Lonsdale Street while the Bishop dedicated the new House.

This house was the headquarters of the life and work of the Sisters for thirteen years. Before it was vacated for the present Mission House, the Community was so straitened for

room that aspirants had to be refused, and the work was hampered seriously. Unable to extend the building in Little Lonsdale Street, the solution was found in the purchase of a site in Spring Street, adjoining St. George's Mission Hall. The land was the gift of Mrs. Aubrey Bowen, and this generous benefactor had plans prepared for the house and promised substantial help in the building of it. Death came suddenly to her, before her intention was effected. What a wrench it was to leave the old Mission House, where the Sisters had worked and prayed, struggled with wickedness and vice, been encouraged with reformations and disappointed with failures. Glancing up from his bench, the workman of to-day sometimes notices a Sister peering through the open door. With the eye of memory or of imagination she is seeing—a factory, it is true, but one where the mould was cast for the shaping of Australia's first Religious Community.

It will be convenient to tell now of the building of the present Mission House. In 1910 the sum of £153 was raised towards this purpose by the performance of a Church History pageant, and this was added to gradually by numerous benefactors. It is recounted that an influential person was being shown over the partially finished building, and he raised the old cry, 'To what purpose is this waste?' of the additional expenditure for the chapel. The Mother dealt in characteristic fashion with his objection: 'You would not build your wife a home in which there was no drawing-room. What her drawing-room is to your wife, that and much more the chapel is to the Sisters.'

The move was accomplished during June (1913), and on the Feast of the Visitation, July 2nd, the chapel and the house were dedicated. 'After several weeks with no chapel, we now have a beautiful place where we can pray and praise

God.' The new chapel seemed palatial then, and the Mother was proud and happy about the comfortable arrangements which could be made for those who attended a Quiet Day for women shortly after the dedication. Sometimes when the new house was admired the Mother would remark, 'We are much too respectable.' During the war one of the soldier boys from the Mission Hall sent home four saints' heads in stained glass. These belonged by right to a parish in the vicinity of Villers Brettoneaux, but with the church reduced to ruins and the social life of the place disrupted this souveniring from the debris was not so very reprehensible, perhaps, and the lad was delighted when they were set in a window of the south wall of the chapel.

It was in 1907 that the Sisters undertook the management of two city schools. In Cumberland Place—a lane at the rear of the old Mission House—stood the Hornbrook School, one of the Free Scripture Schools, or Ragged Schools as they were sometimes called, which were opened in or about 1863 through the benefactions of the late Mrs. Hornbrook. These schools were in the poorest and worst quarters of the city and the inner suburbs, and had served a useful purpose in their day. With the growth of State Schools the number of scholars diminished, and many of the schools had closed. There were but nine children attending the school in Cumberland Place when the Sisters took over its management. Three of the Sisters at the Mission House were qualified teachers, and this seemed an opportunity of more intensive service where already they were known as the binders up of cuts and wounds of all descriptions. The school re-opened in January, 1907, with twenty scholars, a number which grew rapidly. Leased for some years at a nominal rental, in 1911 the Hornbrook Association made legal transfer of the land and building to the Mission Council.

The 'Hornies' increased by leaps and bounds, and children had to be refused for lack of room. Renamed 'St. George's Day School', it became a strong influence for good in the neighbourhood. In 1912 the old school was pulled down and a fine brick school erected in its place. During the rebuilding the children were taught at the Mission Hall, and so the school was kept open, though with some inconvenience. The money for this enterprise was raised chiefly through the efforts of the faithful Miss Woolley, after the Warden, Dean Godby, had voiced a public appeal. The children were proud of their school, all bright and clean, and it became part of their training to keep it so. Here was the usual mixture of races—Chinese, Jewish, Syrian and many others, all calling themselves Australians.

Wonderful concerts, cantatas and prize-givings were held in the Mission Hall. Year by year the standard of school work improved, and the co-operative spirit developed. In 1916 the examiner who conducted the Education Department's examination reported thus: 'The progress of the examination was considerably aided by the courteous attention and bright response of the children. The tone of the school is distinctly good, and the most pleasing feature of all is the fact that the pupils are not converted into conventional copies, but each is helped to develop individually.' Knowing the children in a way the Inspector did not, the Sisters would smile at this. How impossible to turn these sturdy little individualists out in one mould.

With the years, the character of the district round the school changed, as one by one the little cottages disappeared, giving place to factories. The houses which remained were nearly all of an infamous sort. There was growing disquietude in the minds of the Sisters that the children, whose parents had

moved further away, were coming from respectable homes into an unsavoury quarter of the town. The school kept up its numbers, and every effort was made to safeguard the children, but it was realised that this state of affairs could not continue, and in 1925, with much sadness of heart for teachers and pupils, St. George's Day School was closed.

Coincident with the plans for taking over the Hornbrook School in Cumberland Place, there came a request that the Sisters should manage the Day School belonging to St. John's Church, Latrobe Street. The Sisters were known there through the giving of religious instruction, and through filling the gap when the school was without a head-mistress. At a much earlier period this, too, had been one of the Hornbrook schools, but for many years now it had been under the parish authorities who hoped that with the Sisters' management the school would benefit, among other things, from a greater continuity of leadership. Most of the children came from the homes of respectable, hard-working people, who were known to the Sisters through their visiting in that parish. The Reverend Cadwalader Thomas, the Vicar of St. John's and an old friend, was anxious to have the school under the Sisters' care.

For fifteen laborious but happy years the Sisters managed this school. Midway through that period there was some doubt whether they should continue, for with the resignation of the Reverend Cadwalader Thomas there was talk of the school being demolished. The Archbishop assured the Sisters that he greatly desired its continuance and the parishioners, of course, were of no other mind. St. John's was a 'sixpence a week school', for children whose parents wished them to have something a little gentler than the big State schools of the neighbourhood. Under the Sisters' regime 'extras' were introduced; the commercial course became very popular and many

of the children found good positions. In the last years of its existence several scholarships were founded and promising scholars were able to go on to secondary schools.

When Archbishop Clarke left for England there was a touching little scene at the wharf, when St. John's school-children knelt to receive his blessing as the ship moved off. Soon they were to be scattered, for with the Archbishop's approval removed, and a two years' vacancy in the See, it was decided by those in authority that the church and school should be demolished. In September, 1921, thirty children in the infant class had to be turned away as their room was to be pulled down, and, at the prize-giving some months later, parents and children heard sadly that there would be no reopening for St. John's school. It was a wrench to give up these loved and loving children, and to leave them mourning, not only their school, but the loss of much else that was dear.

Whether the Day Schools were functioning or not, there was always plenty of work for the Sisters at the Mission House. Sunday could not be described as a day of rest. At one period the usual gaol class in the chapel at the Female Prison was supplemented by another in the quarters of those serving indeterminate sentences. A class for girls was held at the Foundling Hospital. Of the activities nearer home: the Mission Hall Sunday School overflowed to the day school building in Cumberland Place, to the vestry for the boys' Bible class, and to the Mission House for the senior girls' class. About twenty boys stayed to the choir boys' tea and to the evening mission service. Odd moments were filled with a variety of matters from the exchange of library books to the handing out and receiving back of 'Sunday boots' which would have been pawned if taken home.

The period when the mission services reached their height of inspiration and usefulness was the decade which included the first world war and the years which preceded and followed it. To think of those services is to see the Mother Foundress at the organ, the orchestra of brass instruments tuned to readiness and the regular members of the congregation taking their places early—a necessary precaution if one wanted to be sure of a seat. One of the school Sisters held sway over the 'drunks' and other casuals who drifted in from the street to fill the rear seats. It was with difficulty, sometimes, that the choir made its entrance through the crowded porch and aisle. The Mother would not allow mawkish, sentimental hymns, but chose praiseful words and tunes with plenty of 'go'. 'God bless the Church of England', and 'I was made a Christian' were great favourites and were sung with much gusto by the congregation. A visitor staying at the Mission House complained after a lantern service that her prayer book, which resembled a purse, had been stolen. 'I am so glad,' said the Mother simply. 'Glad! Did you say you were glad?' 'Yes, I am so glad there were people like that at the service.'

When the service was over the Mother would stand in the hallway, bidding goodnight to all her children, young and old. No one would leave without a word from her, and how exacting they were of personal recognition and affection! One Sunday evening, when all was quiet at last, there came a long ring at the door-bell. There stood old Solomon, tears raining down his cheeks: Would the Mother speak to him? She didn't say Goodnight to him after service. When this was reported to the Mother she protested that she did wish him Goodnight, and shook hands with him, too. 'Yes, she did,' Solomon admitted; 'But she didn't smile at me.' So down came Mother, and at last the old man went happily away.

Attending the Mission Hall services and clubs, and one of the day schools, was a mixed bag of children belonging to a woman of the neighbourhood. Her relationship to some of the children was a little obscure, but they all called her 'Mother,' and she was a good mother to them, in many ways, though she herself was not a good woman. Of strong character she could deal harshly with her children at times—as when, in a rage, she cut off her daughter's hair—but she really loved them and through them she was won to a better way of life. The softening process was begun by Johnnie, who prattled of what he was learning at the Mission. There were great doings when Archbishop Lowther Clarke attended the mission service for the first time, and that night Johnnie made his debut in the choir. The crowded congregation filled all corners and surged about the aisle and entrance, and planted firmly in the midst was this woman, come to see her Johnnie in a surplice. Such a wee mite he looked, very demure, stealing sidelong glances at His Grace. Shortly after this one of the girls was confirmed, and again the mother was present. The sacrament was administered by Bishop Mercer, of Tasmania, who gave an eloquent and moving address. Speaking of the love of God, he used the illustration of the unending circle of the marriage ring as a type of the permanent basis of the Christian home, itself a reflection of God's eternal love. Next day Johnnie's mother presented herself at the Mission House. Could she be married to Johnnie's father? Why, yes, she could, and was, too, after due preparation, and thence forward she pursued the path of virtue with all the resolution with which she had hitherto shunned it.

As the boys of the Mission grew up, an Old Boys' Guild was formed to keep them together. They met once a month for social intercourse, lectures, and to plan what they could do

to help the younger boys. The annual 'Back to St. George's' night became very popular for the renewing of old friendships and for the introduction of those who were more than friends, 'my wife', and 'our baby'. Then the old hall fairly resounded with laughter and chatter and the songs of long ago. Amongst these guests the dear Mother moved, happy, and justly proud that the work of the Mission had helped to turn slum children with no outlook into reliable citizens, good parents, and faithful Christians.

Before closing this record of the work at and around the Mission House, some indication should be made of the development of the Court work. When our Mother made her way into the police courts and gaol of this city she was, if not the first to do so, then one of the first who attended the court in the capacity of what we now call a Probation Officer. Her work there led police officials and others to appreciate the possibility of such a service, and thus grew the idea of how much could be done by a band of workers moved by a genuine desire to succour the needy. Later, representatives of the Roman Catholic church and certain of the Protestant denominations attended the courts—some regularly, some intermittently. After the inauguration of the Children's Court, in 1913, persons approved and appointed were given official status as Probation Officers. Long before there were any voluntary or stipendiary probation officers, Sister Eleanor, trained by the Mother Foundress, did a work unequalled in its day, or since. Like her Master she was known as the friend of publicans and sinners, but it was not only the prisoners—including the most notorious characters—who sought her help and advice, but also judges, magistrates, constables, detectives and prison authorities turned to her in times of perplexity or on matters of especial delicacy and found the wise counsel they needed.

At the application court, where mothers went to burden the State with children whom they were unable or unwilling to support, the Sisters met with many strange stories. Often they were able to relieve genuine distress. The plight of the unmarried mother presents the dual problem of what is best for mother and child. Some of these young women were met with for the first time during the hearing of maintenance cases, but many more had sought help at the Mission House before that, and profited by the wise guidance of Sister Eleanor. The Mother Foundress' devotion to the weak and helpless was nowhere more apparent than in her concern for the unwanted little ones. From the courts and from many private sources, these infants came under her care, many to be adopted into homes which their presence made completely happy.

There are many ways in which the Sisters may serve the outcast and the criminal still, but the days of such intensity of need are over. The excellent system prevailing in the police force, the work of the women police, and the policy of warning youthful delinquents before bringing them before the court is having its effect, which can be seen in the lessening number of juvenile offenders and in the diversion of many reformatory homes to other forms of service.

The founding of St. George's Hospital brings to mind 'dear little Miss Hughes'—Florence Annie Hughes, the close friend and supporter of the Sisters and their cause. In 1911, soon after the death of her mother, Miss Hughes gave her home 'Ellerslie', set in four acres of ground at Kew, to the Mission, with the hope that it would serve as a home and place of rest for the Sisters themselves. The Mother Foundress could not envisage such ease for herself and her Sisters while others were in need, nor did she wish to live anywhere but at the Mission House. She loved the crowded city and the pulsing

life all about her. 'You must come to the Mission House,' she said once to a visitor at the Children's Home. 'We live there, they only exist here.' When Miss Hughes made her generous gift, the Mother saw the possibility of a dream being realised, a Church hospital where people of moderate means could be nursed. The donor was well content, and the Mother set to work with her usual energy to create interest in the new venture. Soon various parishes and groups of people here and there were holding linen, kitchen and pantry teas and devising other means of help, while the Council set itself to raise money for the necessary alterations.

Accommodation was provided for twenty-eight patients. With bed fees at two guineas a week, the hospital proved a boon to those for whom it was designed. The ground floor was reserved for maternity cases. The Mother Foundress greatly desired that the woman who could not afford large fees should be comfortably and efficiently nursed, and that her new born babe should have the best start possible. For in those days there were few hospitals which took maternity cases, and mothers seeking something between the very expensive private hospital and the gaunt wards of our public hospitals might fall into the hands of unqualified folk and women of dubious character.

The Mother's interest in the mothers and babies was never-failing, and her joy in them was a delightful thing. On her weekly visits to the hospital she rarely missed a call at each cot, with a word of cheer to the proud mothers. Her delight in the little bundles of humanity was so spontaneous and real that she won the mothers' hearts, and she would forecast the future of the infants from their physical characteristics, and astonish the mothers by telling them that she was a mother with a big troublesome family so she knew all about it.

The hospital Sisters had to work very hard, but that was no novelty. Sister Agnes was placed in charge, and sometimes when she was alone for a time, or the others were on duty in the wards, a young probationer—now a missionary in New Guinea—was pressed into service to say the Offices with her. For some years the Sisters at St. George's had to be content with a tiny Oratory for their devotions. In 1917 a chapel was built in the grounds, St. Laurence's chapel in memory of Laurence Oldfield.

St. George's soon won a recognised place in the medical world. The doctors were most cordial, though sometimes over clamorous for extensions before those responsible for the maintenance of the hospital felt that additional building expenses were justified. A maternity block, costing £13,000, was opened in 1923, and since that date the number of births has been between four and five hundred each year. The X-ray department was opened in 1931, and plans, since realised, for a new medical and surgical block of fifty beds were in hand at the time of the Mother Foundress' death.

St. Ives' Private Hospital in East Melbourne was opened by the Community in December, 1918. This hospital was offered on very liberal terms by Dr. Morton. The ten years' lease was with the option of purchase, and it was a source of great satisfaction to the Mother when the final payment was made shortly before her last illness.

In the management of the two hospitals we are afforded a glimpse of the Mother Foundress' remarkable business acumen. Other works of the Community had demonstrated her power to handle people, to influence committees to work for the end she had in view. Her flair for knowing to whom to turn for help was crowned by her sturdy directness in asking for it. Many a business man who worked with her declared that she

had a man's brain, or that a barrister might envy her ability to state her case so succintly. Mr. H. F. Darby, who served on the Mission Council for some years before he became treasurer of St. George's Hospital, speaks thus of the Mother's thoroughness and attention to detail:

> From a business point of view Sister Esther possessed great intuition in that she could readily grasp figures and their meaning, and at a glance could see the financial result of some action or policy. Each month the classification of St. George's expenditure was sent to her, with the details of receipts, and thus she was able to put a finger on any item that needed special attention. Whenever a new department was opened under her direction, she thoroughly organised its conduct and management. I have in possession an inventory she made of the furniture and equipment put into a department. Sister Esther personally kept all the books of account and managed the financial matters of St. Ives' Hospital. Many times she showed me her books, which were concise and businesslike. Each month she seemed to memorise the exact position of affairs and made her decisions from knowledge of the facts. The progress and stability of the hospital was the result.

The impression made by our Mother upon another business man, Mr. C. A. Brown, Registrar of the Diocese of Newcastle, might serve to round off this and also to introduce the subject of the work in that diocese. Mr. Brown says: 'It was a great joy to me, and a privilege, to have had discussion with the Mother Foundress, because she always knew what she wanted. She seemed to think of everything, and had no doubt

in her mind about anything. Because she was so completely in command of any situation, when her advice was asked it was straight to the point and there was no need to say anything further.' These brief words are eloquent of the decisiveness of the Mother's character.

The Community had often been asked to extend its work beyond the borders of Victoria, but insufficiency of numbers would not allow of this. In 1921, however, the Mother yielded to the urgent request of the Bishop of Newcastle, the Right Reverend Reginald Stephen, and sent Sister Alice to take charge of St. Alban's Home for boys, at Morpeth. The house, which overlooked the beautiful Hunter River valley, was the former Bishopscourt, and had been the residence of the first four occupants of the See. Now thirty-five boys called St. Alban's their home. The warmth of welcome and offers of help received from the church people of the diocese cheered not only the Sisters there, but all members of the Community. In 1922 Sister Agnes was lent to the diocese for a year, being engaged on a work which took her into most parishes and the homes of many church people. St. Elizabeth's Home at Mayfield was opened in 1926, and here a large household of girls grew up under Sister Eleanor's loving care. The Reverend Canon Withycombe, then Rector of the parish and Chaplain of St. Elizabeth's, speaks thus of her:

> Sister Eleanor stands in my memory as one of the finest women I have ever known—wise and strong and motherly to the large family of girls

> whom she had under her care. Her influence upon those girls was amazing. Sometimes I meet girls who were with her at St. Elizabeth's, and they always think of her with deep and grateful affection. It was typical of her that when she left us she took with her to Melbourne the most difficult child in the home.

This priest speaks with profound respect of the Mother Foundress' 'wonderful vitality and driving power', and regrets 'the sad withdrawal of the Community from the diocese'. (See Note.)

When the diocese opened St. Christopher's Home for little children in 1928, a promise had been given that the Community would undertake its management. Set in twenty acres of ground, the house at Lochinvar provided a country setting in which the children's characters developed in a particularly charming and unspoiled way which was a delight to all. No one who had known her could forget Margaret, 'the Holy Name baby' who was but two weeks old when she was brought to St. Christopher's on our festival day. This dear child carried joy wherever she went, and her first prayers, her first birthday, were landmarks to the other children. When Margaret was of an age to be in the nursery with the toddlers her self-appointed task was to see the Sisters safely into chapel

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NOTE.—This withdrawal took place after the Mother Foundress' death. The work did not lapse, but was handed over, one house at a time, to workers of the Church Army, whose coming to the diocese enabled the Community to ask for the release of our Sisters for the consolidation of work nearer home.

when the bell rang for Office. These little ones were perfectly at home in and around the chapel, and it was sometimes a surprise to a newly arrived Sister to hear a baby chanting the melody of an office hymn as he went about his play-business. It was a pleasure to be in the company of such lovable children; to hunt with them for eggs in the 'hens' bedroom', to wait with them at the bottom of the garden for the special snort of greeting which the engine-driver sounded for them.

Chapter VI.

MOTHER IN ISRAEL.

'She openeth her mouth with wisdom.'

When the Mission House was established and it became known what was being accomplished for the poor and outcast, and that in the Head Sister there was a woman of remarkable personality, there commenced that steady stream of young men which grew until scarcely a day passed without one 'dropping in' for some purpose.

They came to help, and to be helped. Under Sister Esther's tuition how many postulants for Holy Orders took their first service in the Mission Room? All things must be done decently and in order, therefore their parts must be rehearsed with care, and she must sit at the back of the hall to make sure that they are audible. 'Saul took a sword and fell upon it.' 'Louder!' 'Saul took a sword and fell upon it.' Screened by the curtain two wicked Novices are enjoying the dialogue, a fact of which the nervous neophyte fortunately is unaware. Sister Esther, too, is unconscious of anything but the matter in hand. She was very firm with her young men, and no false modesty was permitted. 'You will sing the service,' she announced to a Lay Reader who came in much fear and trepidation to take his first service at the Mission Hall. 'Sing! I have not taken a service before, and I shall be lucky if I can so much as *say* it.' 'Not taken a service before!' (throwing up her hands in pretended horror); 'What will they send us next? Never mind; you will sing the service.'

'But, really, Mother, I can't.' 'Now listen to me. You are an Englishman and I am an Englishwoman. We cannot let these Australians beat us. You will sing the service.' And so, of course, he did.

Splendid assistance was given by these young men; in the Mission Services when no priest was available, in conducting boys' clubs, helping with the lantern, serving in the soup kitchen. These happy times of fellowship brought them valuable experience, and through all there was the association with this wonderful woman around whom the work revolved, and who was always ready to listen to their hopes, problems and aspirations; delighting, inspiring, electrifying them by the breadth of her knowledge, the fervour of her faith, and the keenness of her humour. They loved her rapier-like wit, whether manifested in the sly thrust at their own idiosyncracies or in the penetration of humbug in high places. A born teacher, her well-stocked mind was at the disposal of all who turned to her, and much of her conversation was of this informative, instructive quality, yet withal so winning and loving, so human and humble, with a complete absence of superiority. The influence she exerted over them, the profound admiration they had for her, and the love which was mutual between them, these are realities which cannot be documented; they are written in the fleshy tablets of the heart and woven into the fibre of the many lives she touched for God. A glimpse is revealed sometimes in the quickened interest, the softened tone of love and reverence, with which a priest speaks of her: 'The little Mother. Ah! the dear little Mother.'

Such a one gives us the vivid word-pictures which follow:

> My introduction to Sister Esther was memorable. I was a very young theological student, attending regularly a church in an eastern suburb

of Melbourne. The parish was run on evangelical lines, and in many ways the evangelical spirit showed here at its best. But in matters of worship there was no pretension; priest and people were 'low Church', and proud of it. Once a month we had a social meeting, and the Vicar used to arrange for visitors to give us talks on various subjects. In spite of his Calvinistic friends, he was really a broad and kindly man, and he wanted very much that Sister Esther should come and tell us about her work. But he was filled with fear. Some of his people were violently protestant and might object to a woman in nunnish dress. So in his study beforehand he mildly suggested that she hide in her habit that large cross he saw suspended from her neck. She replied that she could not do that, for it was part of her uniform. Later, when she rose to speak to us, the first thing she did was to display the cross and say what it meant to her. Then she laughed as she stole a glance at the horrified Vicar, and went on to tell us that in her habit she could go where no other respectable woman could, nor yet the police.

Sister Esther invited two of us to the Mission Chapel where there was a wonderful Sunday Evensong. It was great fun to see Sister Agnes putting clean collars round the dirty necks of the choir boys. My companion could sing, so he was put to that, and I was to read the sermon. I chose one of Scott Holland's great bits of oratory and hoped it sounded well. After Evensong Sister Esther thanked us and

told me that next time I came I was to kick my manuscript down the aisle.

Most of the stories which I could tell about Sister Esther revolve round my own personal shortcomings, rather than her characteristics. She was too great to describe. But these things intensify our thankfulness that under God there was such a one to do the work she did; not only to establish the Community and instruct her Sisters in the things of the Religious Life, but also that she possessed all the best of womanly nature with a few of the powers of man. And she was a great administrator.

Another priest writes of his 'happiness in being allowed to take part each month in those homely mission services on Sunday nights with the Mother at the organ. I always felt that it was a congregation which nobody else wanted, but one which was ever welcome at the Mission House. We of the choir were a mixed collection of all nationalities.'

Visitors invariably commented upon the mixture of races in this congregation. It was a cheerful blend, for everyone felt at home, known and accepted, but it was obvious that such a group would be correspondingly awkward and ill at ease in any other place of worship, if indeed any could be persuaded to enter it. Unconventional of costume and of speech, there were many warm hearts among them, and the 'regulars' were often affectionately patronising towards the young men who came to exhort them to the good life. 'A fine young chap, that,' was high praise from a weedy rag-and-bone merchant, while his wife, clutching at some of their numerous offspring, would add her tribute, 'Oh, it was beautiful. He spoke right out of the bottom of his heart.'

Yet another priest gives us these recollections, which cover many years' association with the Community:

My first contact with the Mother Foundress was about the beginning of the century, when as a young layman I helped occasionally in the Sunday work at the Mission, where I actually 'took' my first service one Sunday evening. I had not spoken to a Religious before, and I well remember the awe with which I approached the Reverend Mother. Confessing that I was very nervous, I asked the Mother to make all allowances for me. 'If you do as I tell you,' she said, 'you will get along all right.' In the years that followed I came to realise that in this shortly spoken sentence the good Mother had set the line of our association.

Time and time again I went to her for counsel, and rarely, if ever, did I fail to do as she told me, and came out 'all right.' During the time I was at St. John's College, I was frequently at the Mission House in Little Lonsdale Street, and if I needed a book, or some light on my studies, the Mother was generally able to supply it. She had an amazing knowledge of theology, and seemed to be able to lay her hands at once on the source of such information as I needed. In a curious way she seemed to regard me as a protege of her own, and did not hesitate even to make candid comments on my personal appearance. 'Give me that waistcoat,' she once demanded, and there and then did some repairs to it. 'I don't like that tie—it is much too gay for a young priestling', was another comment. She linked me up with Sister Agnes in her special work amongst

the boys of the Mission, and in the years in which I was President of the Church of England Cricket and Football Associations, allowed us to have our meetings in the Mission Hall. Those were noisy gatherings, at times, and one night there was almost a riot between the representatives of two teams who were at variance, but it was quieted instantly when the Mother came unexpectedly into the Hall and demanded, 'What is the meaning of all this?' She said to me afterwards, 'Don't be too easy on these Australian boys. They need a good hiding now and then.'

Another memory of those days is of our being suddenly interrupted in a conversation by a call to the Mother to go out into Little Lonsdale Street (which was then a rather unsavoury quarter) to deal with some women who were fighting in the street. Out went the Mother, myself following rather timidly. There was a small crowd lower down the street. Right among them the Mother went, pulled two or three screaming women apart, gave some straight talk to the crowd, and by the time the police appeared had sent two of the women into a house and was giving the other—quite a young girl—some quieting advice. The Mother told me after that she had been able to induce this girl to return to her parents in the country.

As the time drew near for my ordination to the Priesthood, the Mother told me that she was making a set of vestments for me, and these she gave to me on the eve of the ordination. She also carefully tutored me in the art of celebrating the Holy

Mysteries (nothing of this kind was included in our theological training) and it was in the little chapel on the top floor of the old Mission House that I first celebrated the Holy Eucharist. Afterwards there was the happy Communion breakfast in the Refectory, the Sisters and my own dear Mother sharing it. The joy of that morning ever lives in my memory, and the vestments, much worn but still usable, are among my most treasured possessions.

Another token of the Mother's affection and confidence was afforded me when, summoning me to Melbourne one day, she told me that we were to go to Kew to inspect a house which had been given to the Community by Miss Hughes, and to talk over what was to be done with it. We had often spoken of the need of a Church hospital, and I think that on that day the foundation of St. George's Hospital was decided. It gave the Mother great pleasure when, at Vermont, we had the first of the Linen Teas' which were held to furnish the hospital.

And behind it all, though very well supported by the other good Sisters, I see that wonderful little woman, so wise, so knowledgeable, so courageous, so masterful and yet so kind, and, above all, such a lover of Our Blessed Lord, and so devoted to His Holy Church. To her, much as it may be shared by others, lies the credit very largely of making the catholic aspect of our Church's life and worship understood and accepted in Victoria, and the practice of the Religious Life for women a recognised and valued element in the life of the Church in Australia. Others have entered into her labours, indeed, and

> gloriously so, but only we, perhaps, who were privileged to be associated with her in them can fully know how much we ourselves and the Church generally owe to Sister Esther, the Mother Foundress of the Community of the Holy Name.

The Eucharistic vestments were worn in the Sisters' chapels from the first, though the celebrant might have to be taught how to vest. There was no money for buying expensive materials, but Sister Esther had a valuable gift for utilising everything that came her way, and with her eye for colour and design she saw the possibilities of what others regarded as useless. Her blend of colours was always artistic, though sometimes a little surprising, and she delighted in collecting trimmings, jewels and beads with which to decorate her figure work. These would appear later as a halo of pearls for Our Lady, or a jewelled sword flashing in St. George's hand. The Mother worked very quickly, often in rooms where the light was poor. The brightness of the acetylene gas used for the lantern gave her the idea that this might serve for embroidery work at night, and with the assistance of a friend who helped sometimes with the lantern, this scheme was carried out satisfactorily.

The first of the Church embroidery, and always a great part of it, was designed for the chapels of the Community, but there was much more than that. Those of the clergy who were seeking to introduce something of beauty into the bareness of their churches, something of dignity into their services, found in Sister Esther a source of help and encouragement. She was ready to listen and advise, and also to act. How many hours she spent in choosing materials for altar cloths and hangings, embroidering linen, making confirmation veils, coloured stoles, and Eucharistic vestments. The first vestments made for the

parishes were of white linen, until gradually, here and there, some bolder spirits felt they could introduce the liturgical colours. A country priest who wished to have a surpliced choir invited Sister Esther to send the Mission Hall choir boys to his parish for a picnic and to sing Evensong in the church afterwards. Seeing the little boys from the slums, behaving so reverently and looking so angelic in their surplices, the local people were amenable to suggestion, and soon the ladies were stitching surplices and cassocks, in order to have them ready for the consecration of the new church.

Many churches throughout the province can show a set of vestments, a banner, or some smaller piece of work from our Mother's skilful fingers. There was no thought that this work might be a source of revenue. No matter for whom it was done, it was work for the Church, and therefore done gladly from pure love of God, and to His Glory. Much of the material was provided out of treasures put by for such purposes, while to poor and struggling parishes everything was given most gladly. Not until 1941 did the Community accept any money for work of this kind. Sometimes a priest, remembering the help he had received, would bequeath some treasured ornament to the Community.

The first Cope worn at the Cathedral was on the occasion of the Memorial Service for His Majesty King Edward VII. The Archbishop felt he should do something to mark the occasion, and there was one near at hand to advise him: 'What you need is a Cope. Send for Sister Esther.' This Cope was of purple poplin with purple velvet orphreys and white braid, so unusual a vestment in the Cathedral that choir-boys were heard remarking on the table cloth the Bishop was wearing. It was made in three days, the Sisters working in relays. Some years later the Community made and presented to the Arch-

bishop a cope of white kirkstall, the figured silk orphreys ornamented with the crossed swords of St. Paul and the appropriate coat of arms. The richly embroidered hood was centred by the figure of the Dove, which appeared again above the Chalice and Host of the stole.

Added to the Mother's gifts was a knowledge of heraldry, so she was able to design aright the arms for the dioceses, and the symbols for patron saints. Perhaps the first Bishop to wear a cope made in Australia was Bishop Gilbert White of Carpentaria. This cope, of kirkstall with orphreys of brocaded silk embroidered with roses of sharon and gold filagree, also bore the arms of the diocese: the Lamb of God on an azure sea crossing to the island of pearls. The morse was centred by a large cairngorn. When Bishop White was translated to Willochra this cope was left in Thursday Island, and another made for the Bishop in his new diocese.

Let us conclude this brief resume of a work which was dear to the Mother, by a touching and beautiful story from a priest who, too, was dear to the Mother. He calls it:

The Story of the Little White Chasuble.

> Let me take you back a great many years to the little old Mission House where the Community of the Holy Name had its beginning.
>
> There is a young Priest who had been ordained on the Feast of St. Thomas, and in the little oratory there he is about to celebrate the Holy Mysteries for the first time. The Mother Foundress has made his vestments, of which this little white chasuble is one, with her own hands, and she tells the young Priest that he is to bless them himself. So he blesses them, and she vests him, and breaking the silence which is

kept in a Religious House at that hour she says: 'May the Priest be ever worthy of his Priesthood,' and she kneels before him for his blessing. There were present that day some few who are still with us, but most have been called into Paradise—the Mother Foundress, Sister Agnes, and Sister Eleanor.

The young Priest is not allowed to wear his vestments in the Parish where he is Curate, for they are almost unknown at that time in Melbourne, but soon he goes to Warburton, and the little white chasuble is the first to be worn there; the first to be worn in any of the country around. One day the Priest receives a call to a mine where there has been an accident. It is a long and lonely road, and on the way he enquires his route at a little hut. It is the Eve of St. Michael and All Angels, and surely the Holy Angels have led him there, for he finds a couple of devout communicants, out from England, who are longing for the Blessed Sacrament of which they have been deprived for months through isolation. The next day, after his other services, he re-visits the hut, and sets up an altar in the garden. Never will he forget the singing of the birds, and the joy and reverence of those two faithful souls. The little white chasuble was worn on that occasion.

Soon after a certain Christmas, he takes a party of boys to camp; some are from St. George's Mission Hall. The altar is set up in beautiful surroundings, and on Sunday there is a Sung Eucharist, and the little white chasuble is worn. After the service begins, a buggy drives along the rough track, and the driver pulls up in astonishment at the sight

of an altar with crucifix and candles, a vested priest, and a congregation of kneeling boys. In a minute a clear manly voice—an unmistakably Welsh voice—joins in the chant. It is one of the men from the buggy. He comes up last at the time of the Communion, and whispers to the Priest, 'Will you reserve for me, please? I must make my confession first.' And the Priest does so, and after confession gives the young man his Communion. He was the son of a Welsh clergyman, and had come to Australia some months before and had got into bad company. He said: 'Before Christmas I had a letter from Mother in which she said that they would be with me in spirit at the altar on Christmas Day. But I was having a spree on Christmas Day, and to-day I came out with those men to finish it, and —But God is very good; He led me here.'

The Priest took the little white chasuble to Tasmania, and it was the first Eucharistic vestment ever worn there. Later, he visited a certain Island to minister to the white people (at that time there was no Anglican Mission there). The Governor had brought with him as his personal servant a young native from the Solomons, a devout communicant. The Holy Eucharist was celebrated on the verandah of the Governor's house, and it was a full dress occasion, as the Governor rightly insisted. But more than the splendour of the many uniforms and decorations worn, the Priest valued the sight of the brown hands of the native outstretched beside the white hands of the Governor, to receive Him Who is the Lord of all.

> So the little white chasuble has shared many experiences, and it has never been worn without a prayer for the beloved Community, in Paradise and on earth.

Mention is made elsewhere of visits which the Sisters paid to country and suburban parishes in order to speak to the people. The object of these addresses was three-fold: First, to make the work known and secure its support; secondly, to win recognition for the Religious Life as an 'holy estate' in the English branch of the Catholic Church; and thirdly, to awaken those who claimed membership in the Church to the privileges and responsibilities of that membership.

The tour through part of Gippsland in February, 1897, is suggestive of the time and strength expended on such work. On five successive week-nights Sister Esther delivered lectures in the towns of Warragul, Traralgon, Rosedale, Sale and Bairnsdale. An Anglican Sister was 'news' in those days, and in those parts, and in one town, where her subject was 'The Dark Side of City Life,' the meeting was reported thus:

> Sister Esther, properly costumed in the attire of a nun, delivered an address last night in St. John's schoolroom. It was a singularly persuasive discourse.

And again:

> There was no lack of direct speaking by Sister Esther when she addressed an audience in St. John's schoolroom on behalf of the Church of England Mission to the Lost and Miserable in Melbourne.
>
> It was her desire to stir up interest in the work of the Sisterhood to which she belonged, and in the pursuance of it the Sister gave an address which, though delivered in the most unaffected and natural way in the world, might have melted the most con-

> firmed cynic by the singular earnestness which inspired it and by the deep but simple pathos of parts of it. Not the least wonderful thing about it was that she did not appear to think she could move or entertain her listeners. Perhaps that is the secret of her power—the absence of any consciousness of self-sufficiency.

Journalese, perhaps, and one cannot but wonder what finer shades of meaning, if any, attach to being *properly* costumed in the attire of a nun; nevertheless, it is obvious that the personality of the speaker has left its impression of great forcefulness of character and deep sincerity of purpose.

Wherever a hearing could be won—and that was sometimes in unlikely places—the Sisters were prepared to go, teaching, affirming, giving a reason for the hope that was in them. Good service was done in helping to found branches of the Mothers' Union, and 'talks' setting forth the ideals of that society gave excellent opportunity for Church teaching. To such a group there was the enjoyable piquancy of speaking as one who had 'many more children than she which had an husband,' and from the depths of much experience of the good and bad in human nature came the wise, homely, outspoken and authoritative advice. And when Sister Esther herself was the speaker there was always the enlivening touch of humour. 'Never threaten and fail to perform. If you tell a child that you will knock his head off, then you must do it.' Church Schools, Sunday Schools, branches of the Girls' Friendly Society, of the Ministering Children's League, were visited and invited to come to the Homes and 'see for themselves.'

Lantern slides were a useful medium for teaching, especially in the country districts where pictures of the Sisters' work could take the place of a visit to the Homes. With the aid of

the lantern, lectures could be given on such subjects as English Church History, the Sacraments, and the Life of Our Lord. Sister Agnes was one who exercised a wide influence. A gifted teacher, the strong personality of this first Australian-born Sister left its mark on many lives. Sister Agnes was noted for the emphasis she laid upon right doctrine, and the large place she gave to it in her teaching, as well as for the clarity and attractiveness with which it was presented.

A priest who was often at the Mission House, used to say, illustrative of this devotion to doctrinal teaching: 'If Sister Agnes found a boy knocked down in the street, I know what her first question would be.' And in a lively strain he drew a picture of the Sister bending over the boy and earnestly enquiring:

'Child, in this your hour of need,
'Tell me, can you say the Creed?'

There remains to be told the story of the notable contribution to friendship with the Holy Orthodox Church made by the Mother Foundress' kindness and hospitality to the Syrians, Greeks and Russians in our midst, especially in those days when they were unshepherded by a priest of their own Communion.

Living near the Mission House were many Syrian and Greek families, and a strong bond of affection united this fraternity to the Sisters. Deeply religious themselves, they could understand better than most the Sisters' wholehearted devotion to the service of God and His Church. When it was found that both the Roman Catholics and a dissenting body were making strenuous efforts to induce the Orthodox to attend their services, the Sisters offered their Mission Room to the Syrians that they might hold in their own tongue such religious services as a layman could conduct. At the first service the

Bishop of Melbourne was present and pronounced the blessing in Arabic, after delivering an address which was interpreted by one of the Syrians, Katarr Keamy, whom the Bishop had authorised to act as Reader. On subsequent occasions Katarr read a Syrian service and either interpreted the sermon given by one of the Anglican priests, or preached himself from a sermon which Sister Esther had sent him during the preceding week. At first the Syrians held their service at night, after the congregation had dispersed from the English service, but after some months this was changed to a morning hour. At one Easter, at least, the Orthodox received the Sacraments at the hands of the Anglican clergy. The Greek Easter, of course, was at a different date from the Western, but the Mission Room was arranged with equal care for the Orthodox festival, and the Sisters enjoyed the fun of the crackers and candles distributed at the close of the service, treasuring Katarr's reply to a passer-by who asked the reason of all this noise on a Sunday morning: 'If the King of England came to Melbourne you would let off crackers. We do this because the King of Kings has come back to us from the grave.' Dear, gentle Katarr, ending his life of faithfulness at the Sanitorium at Heatherton, and coming from there, as long as he was able, to see the Sisters at the House of Mercy, listening hungrily to the organ music played for him by one of the Sisters, asking again and again for his much-loved 'Hail, gladdening Light.'

To return to our narrative: it was thought good to notify the Patriarch of Jerusalem of what was being done for the Orthodox in Melbourne. The Reverend T. Dowling, domestic chaplain to Bishop Blyth, the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, was then leaving for Australia, and His Beatitude charged him to deliver the following letter to the Bishop of Melbourne:

From the Patriarch of Jerusalem to the
Right Reverend Field Flowers Goe, Bishop of Melbourne.
Greeting in Christ the Saviour and God.

Praised be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and of all mercies and consolations, for He granted us consolation in your praiseworthy virtues and fatherly care, proved by your kindness to the sons of the Most Holy Orthodox Church, residing in Melbourne.

The bearer of this letter, the Reverend T. Dowling, English Chaplain, having informed us that there are in Melbourne many persons of the Orthodox Church, who emigrated from Syria, and who are in complete privation and without ecclesiastical help, they find comfort in a manner pleasing to God through your evangelical care and protection.

We, therefore, as leader of those who are executing God's words, beg to tender our thanks on behalf of our Most Holy Orthodox Church, the Mother of all the Churches entrusted to us by His divine grace.

At the same time we warmly beg you to take into your benevolent and spiritual solicitude the abovementioned Orthodox strangers and all others who are not unworthy of your aid, and to be good enough to receive them lovingly, kindly, and meekly according to the teaching of Christ, in order that they may not err and fall into temptation, but that they may obtain the inheritance of heaven.

In thanking you again on behalf of our Orthodox Christians, we conclude in praying the Almighty

to grant your beloved Eminence long life and peace wherever you are, and to bestow upon you the grace of His boundless mercies with everlasting and invincible power and strength.

Given in the Holy City of Jerusalem, this 8th day of August, 1892.

(Signed) GERASSIMOS,
Patriarch of Jerusalem.

There was a crowded congregation in the Mission Room on that Sunday in September when the Reverend T. Dowling preached, for he bore a letter and benediction from His Beatitude Gerassimos, Patriarch of the Holy City and of all Palestine, to the Orthodox Christians, and the present of a vestment and service books also. A fortnight later the Syrians' reply to His Beatitude was read at their service.

The Bishop of Melbourne had given permission for the Syrians to be married and buried by the clergy of the Anglican Church, and also for the children of Syrian parents to be baptised in the Anglican Church. Holy Baptism was administered according to the rites of the Orthodox Greek Church, with triple immersion in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The anointing of the Chrism was deferred until the arrival of an Orthodox priest with the necessary holy oil. Sister Esther had the whole service written out in note-books, the rubrics carefully underlined in red. One copy is in her own beautiful handwriting. Some of the baptisms took place in St. Peter's Church, and then the great tub, painted with Greek symbols by the Mother herself, had to be carried from the Mission House for the ceremony. Marriages according to the Orthodox rites were celebrated in the language of the people for the Greeks and Syrians. All details were arranged with great care. The Reverend E. S.

Hughes, who was zealous in his care for the Orthodox Christians, would study the service beforehand with Katarr, the Russian Consul would be present to interpret the Oath, and the Sisters would go off to Fitzroy or thereabouts to fetch 'Saleeba's bride', or whoever it might be. Several photographs record these happy events, which must have been a delightful mixture of formality and homeliness. The Russian Consul showed great interest in the Syrian services, and when he attended he would read a portion of the Holy Scriptures in Greek. '75 men, 4 women; the Russian Consul read the Gospel in Greek.' When the numbers are recorded, as on this occasion, the proportion of men is always very great.

The visit of the Jerusalem Chaplain aroused great excitement and enthusiasm, and hopes were entertained of securing an Orthodox priest. Conferences begun at the Mission House would be continued at the office of the Russian Consul, when Sister Esther, Mr. Hughes and Katarr would confer with Count Poutiata about the matter. Letters were sent to Jerusalem, St. Petersburg and Constantinople, but it was some years before the negotiations were brought to a successful conclusion. Count Poutiata had died and his successor in office, Baron Ungern-Steinburg, though not a churchman, did his best to help. The offer of Theophanes, Archdeacon of Jerusalem, to send a married priest was refused, and the Russian Consul guaranteed that if a monk from the Russian Mission in Jerusalem were brought out, he should be paid by the Russian Government.

In September, 1897, the Sisters were honoured guests at the reception given by the Orthodox Christians to Pater Dorotheus, Archimandrite. This priest came originally from Constantinople, and was sent on a Mission to Bagdad, where he fell into the hands of the Turks and was taken prisoner. On his escape his superiors sent him to Australia, with

instructions to pay his respects to the Anglican Bishop and not to celebrate the Divine Liturgy until he had done so. The Archimandrite came to see the Mission Hall, and was present at the (English) service the following Sunday, pronouncing the Blessing in Greek, as he had as yet no English. The Mission Hall congregation was astonished at the apparition in the gorgeous robes, seen now for the first time in Australia. There was much friendly welcoming and exchange of courtesies when Sister Esther inspected the Greek Church, then emerging from the reconstructed Chalmers' Chapel in Victoria Parade, and when the Archimandrite accepted the certificates of those who had received Holy Baptism at the hands of the Anglican clergy.

The ikons which have adorned the walls of the Mission House chapel for many years were presented to the Mother Foundress in token of the love which the Orthodox Christians bore to the Sisters. The two smaller ikons were the gift of the Russian Consul. A sheet of paper detached from its context bears prayers and directions in the Mother's handwriting for what must have been the Consul's funeral service, for after the Kyries comes the prayer: 'We beseech Thee on behalf of the soul of Thy servant Alex Poutiata who is lying before Thee, that all his sins ——' And here it breaks off, unfinished.

When Canon Snodgrass, then Warden of the Community, was in Jerusalem in 1924, His Beatitude the Orthodox Patriarch told him that the work of the Sisters in Melbourne was remembered every Thursday at the Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and would be 'till the end of time.' In the year 1925 the Mission House was honoured by a visit from Archbishop Kinites of the Eastern Orthodox Church, who called to express the thanks of his communion for the kindness and sympathy extended to his people by the

Sisters. Some years after this it was possible to show further hospitality to the Orthodox. The Syrians had shared with the Greeks the ministrations of the Greek priest, but they longed to hear their religious services in their own tongue, and always took advantage of visits from Sydney of the Arabic-speaking priest to hold services in the Mission Hall. Now they had brought to Melbourne a Russian priest who could speak Syrian, and while the building which they had bought was being adapted to their purpose, the Mission Hall was once again the scene of the worship of this devout people.

In the last hundred years there has been a growing movement towards the reunion of Christendom, and the rapprochement has been most marked between the Eastern Orthodox Church and our own. In the signal services rendered by Canterbury to persecuted national churches and isolated groups of Christians, the aim has been, not the absorption of these groups into the Anglican Communion, but the preservation of their identity until the tyranny was overpast and the national character of such churches could reassert itself. We see in the story related above, this same pure, disinterested love and care under conditions local to Melbourne, and once again we recognise how the actions of our Mother Foundress are in harmony with the best traditions, the most significant and Christ-like activity, of the Church of her baptism.

Chapter VII.

THE COMMUNITY: ITS FOUNDATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

'She riseth also while it is yet night.'

Sister Esther went to live at the Mission House in response to a clear call from God, but the full content of that call was not clear. Prior to His ministry, Our Blessed Lord went into the wilderness to learn the Will of God—we are not to suppose that He had mapped out a programme for forty days fasting and prayer—and He came up out of the wilderness to do that Will. The listening ear, the heart ever lifted to God, the will never alienated by sin: these were the pledges of His obedience to what, surely, must have been a progressive revelation. So with our Mother. There was a work to be done, and it is significant that it did not occur to her that the work could be done except by a Sister, and in a Sister's habit, but she was not armed with a ready-made scheme for the founding of a Sisterhood. Because she was a Religious at heart—though precluded as yet from making her Vows—there was a life to be lived which must correspond as nearly as possible to that which had been shown to her of God. The foundation of the Community of the Holy Name is distinguished by the simplicity of its unpremeditated beginning. Naturally and inevitably, the work undertaken in Christ's name merged with that form of life embraced for His sake; these others who came to give themselves to the service of God asked nothing but to live in all things as she to whom they

looked for guidance. The crowded days—and nights— left no room for introspection, for wondering at the uniqueness of their position. To fulfil daily their religious obligations and the claims of charity, to snatch nightly enough sleep to give refreshment for the morrow, were matters sufficiently engrossing and imperative. Moreover, the deeply satisfying nature of the life bred a temper of mind in which that first fine careless rapture looked no further than the present good.

Thus it was at the beginning, and for how long this extemporaneous period lasted cannot be told with certainty. Sister Esther's decision to remain in Australia gave a recognised permanency to this regime, and brought an appreciation of the fact that the leader of the group of three was called to pioneer a new way of life in the Church in Australia. But there was no violent break with the spontaneity of its origin, only a deepened sense of responsibility, an added thoughtfulness, as it became requisite to plan and legislate for the future.

And in truth there was need for thought. In every wonderful story of the founding of a new Community there are marks which distinguish it from others, arising, perhaps, from local difficulties overcome or singular hindrances removed, and this particularity becomes its special glory, as it was then its special cross. The lineaments of our Community were chiselled in a spiritual loneliness and isolation which, while not absent altogether from other ventures, are here so sharply defined as to be remarkable. The communities of women in England had for their direction and stay those stalwart and saintly men who are rightly regarded as their founders—Pusey, Butler, Carter, Neale—a host of names come to mind. Even the sister community founded from Clewer some years later in the north of Australia was to have as its Warden through many of its early years of struggle that gifted priest, Henry

Le Fanu, later Archbishop of Perth and Primate of Australia. But when the first Sisterhood was cradled in Melbourne the responsibility for its guidance, for its very existence, rested upon the shoulders of one young woman. The applause which greeted their work, the numbers who were roused to support it with their alms and their personal service, all this appreciation of and emphasis upon *doing*, contrasted painfully with the lack of sympathy for the inner aims and ideals of a Sister's life. Some there were—certain priests, and a few helpers—who could go a long way with them, but Sister Esther well knew that if she carried her little band of Sisters forward beyond a certain point, they went alone and unattended. It was a position of some delicacy, of great loneliness, but challenging to one endowed as she was with powers of statesmanship, and with exceptional gifts of faith, courage and ability.

Sister Esther had been trained is a 'Bishop's Community'; the Bishop of Oxford was the Visitor of the Wantage Sisterhood, and before him or an episcopal deputy appointed by him the Sisters made their profession. Her strong feeling for authority made Sister Esther determined that episcopal recognition should be accorded this foundation, too. She saw the strength of such a position, and that it was far better to concede certain things and be under authority than to follow one's own sweet will and be harried, or unrecognised. Bishop Goe was a kind and fatherly man, with a real desire that the poor and the fallen should be uplifted by a ministry such as the Sisters could give. He would not interfere in domestic matters if the Sisters chose to make some rules for themselves, but like many of his day he was fearful of an organized Religious Community, and caution was a very strong element in his character. The Sisters wanted episcopal recognition, and he

wanted to retain their services. Very well! He would make them into deaconesses.

Sister Esther was faced with a difficult decision. Where did her duty lie? Canon Handfield, who was so eminently qualified to espouse the Sisters' cause in public, and to counsel, cheer and comfort them through their arduous work, hesitated to advise any course which might alienate the diocesan authorities. He desired greatly, not only that the Sisters should continue their work, but that the witness of their lives might shine upon the Church as a whole. Moreover, Deaconesses were a 'Primitive Order' within the Church, of greater antiquity than the Religious Orders. But Sister Esther believed implicitly in the vocation which had been given her. It was the ground of all her confidence. God had called her to the Religious Life and He would not leave her 'until He had done that which He had spoken to her of.'

Her deliberations resulted in a compromise. These others should be made Deaconesses by the Bishop, but she herself would not. She would wait. Inch by painful inch they would commend their way of life until at last it won acceptance by all. Her decision would not be questioned, for there was much confusion in men's minds about the Religious Life, and many were vague about her status, some even thought that she had been professed at Wantage (a charge, with its implication of broken vows, which was brought against her later by her detractors). It was a compromise; an instance of that power to strike a balance between warring tensions which has been the peculiar genius of the English people.

All this time the two young probationers were being led through what one of them described as 'a pretty severe training' by their almost equally youthful Head Sister. Canon Handfield came once a week to lecture them, and to set papers

for the following week. A scholar himself, he wished them to be well grounded in knowledge. The culmination of this training was the service in St. Peter's Church, when, in the presence of a large congregation, the Bishop 'solemnly admitted' Sister Ellen and Sister Christina, presenting them with an eight-pointed cross. The choir was augmented by the gentlemen from Trinity College and those lay readers who assisted with the Mission services. Addressing the young Sisters, the Bishop spoke of 'the great honour that God conferred upon them in accepting their services in that work of mercy which the Son of God Himself had undertaken to accomplish, and which by the Ever-Blessed Spirit He is ceaselessly carrying on, through the manifold services of men and angels, constituted in a wonderful order.'

There were others in training at and about this time, but these were either promised to other States when they should have won some experience, or they were found unsuitable. If the work was to expand there must be more Sisters, and this year (1890) Canon Handfield closed his Annual Report with the following appeal:

> In recognising our little Mission as an oasis amidst so much sin and vice, we cannot but realise how we are hampered in our work of enlarging our borders by lack of funds, by lack of helpers, by want of women who will give themselves to this life of self-denial; and we wonder that it is so. Surely it is the duty of the Church to minister to the sick, poor, fallen and destitute, and to combat against the world, the flesh and the devil. Are there not some who have a little spare time to give to help their wanting neighbours? And are there no Australian daughters who are willing to give up the world, and

answer the Master's call, 'Follow Me,' in thus dedicating their lives to the service of our Blessed Lord and His Church?

The Bishop continued to do his part in commending the work, and in his Cathedral Church on the following Good Friday he stated that it was his privilege and pleasure to sponsor this charity. 'The constant work of the Deaconesses—and three more self-denying people could not be found in Melbourne—is to nurse and minister to the sick and miserable, and to do what they can to rescue the fallen and wretched. Anyone who would spend a day in Little Lonsdale Street can see what sort of people resort there for assistance, whose very existence this congregation knows nothing about. You should deem it your privilege, as well as your duty, to contribute, so as to enable this work to be carried on.' (See Note.)

Having sacrificed her personal predelictions to gain a powerful ally, Sister Esther lost no opportunity of strengthening her position. Frequent mention was made in the church papers and in 'Mission Notes' (the precursor of 'In Our Midst') to the diocesan nature of the undertaking: 'The Bishop of the diocese is at the head of this branch of church work.' 'Working as we are under the authority and sanction of the Bishop, we venture to place a record of our doings before the eyes of the diocese to which we belong, and we appeal to all loyal church-people to come and help us, with their means, their sympathy, and their prayers.' A fight lay ahead, and for the work's sake, for the Church's sake, all lawful weapons must be employed.

Opposition was hardening—that opposition which is

(NOTE.—This was the second occasion on which the Good Friday alms were given for the Sisters' work, a custom which continues unbroken to this day.)

always aroused by a movement of the Spirit within the Church —and the little band of Sisters was to pass through the bitter experience of encountering suspicion, prejudice and misrepresentation from those who were of the household of the Faith. Judge what that ostracism meant to our Mother Foundress, than whom there was never a more loyal and devoted daughter of the Church.

As this antagonism increased the Bishop became, if possible, more cautious, though his interest and care for the work never flagged. Sister Esther realised that a more public recognition of the Community, as such, was unlikely during his episcopate. Her confessor ('the one light I had,' she said of him) was about to leave Melbourne for Ballarat. This was the Reverend J. F. Stretch, and with his approval she made a momentous decision. Though it was nearly ten years since she received the religious habit, her formal vows were still unmade. She longed to offer to God the worship of this supreme and irrevocable act, so long deferred: deferred, as we know, not from doubt or hesitation, but because she understood the extreme gravity of the step and that vows thus made involved a contract, not only between God and the individual soul, but with the Church our spiritual Mother, and with the Community as the sphere in which those vows would be fulfilled. Was the Church in Australia ready for a Religious Community whose roots would be here, whose future would be bound up inextricably with the life of the Church, and for whose members there could be no retirement either into secular life or to the security of a mother house in England? The weight of these matters oppressed her; the uniqueness of her position and the daring of her action filled her, not with the elation of a superficial nature, but with the loneliness of those heroic souls upon whom God lays a great and solitary vocation.

On the nineteenth day of June, 1894, Sister Esther made her Religious Profession in Christ Church pro-Cathedral, Ballarat, before the Very Reverend J. F. Stretch (later Bishop of Newcastle, N.S.W.). The long novitiates in England and Australia were ended, though not in cloudless joy. Not lightly, or often, could she speak of that day, but sometimes a glimpse was given to a Sister, perhaps as she prepared to make her own Profession. This is holy ground, in truth, and we, her children, approach with all reverence, for these are the birth-pangs of the Community. Thus she travailed that we might be born and nurtured in that family called by His Holy Name. Dear Mother. Our Mother indeed.

This almost unbearable loneliness must have been lightened by that which linked her Profession to the dear days of the English Novitiate. When the great decision was made, Sister Esther had written to the Sisters at Wantage, and the response had been the sending of the ring and the girdle for her Profession. And there was her dear Sister Eliza Mary's letter, full of love and encouragement. Of the girdle she wrote: 'Of course I made the three knots and fastened the ends myself just as if I were still your old Novice Mistress. With some that sweet relationship never seems to end, and you are of that number.'

The sowing was in tears, but the reaping was in joy. Now that the die was cast all fears were put away and the light and joy which filled her soul renewed the fragile body also with an access of health. In the photographs taken after her Profession our Mother appears younger, more beautiful, than in any others. Earlier photographs portray the resolution of her character, and sometimes the marks of physical strain are apparent; shown with the other Sisters it is evident which one carries the weight of responsibility. Now it is springtime

The Mother Foundress
in 1894

again for one who had appeared older than her years with the burden of many anxieties. In these photographs there is a luminous quality; the eyes shine with an inner light as seeing that which is invisible, the sensitive mouth is curved as if to break into a little secret smile. Strength is melted into tenderness, and loneliness is forgotten as the exile is brought at last into the banqueting-house of the King.

Passing away, saith my God, passing away;
Winter passeth after the long delay;
New grapes on the vine, new figs on the tender spray,
Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.
Though I tarry, wait for Me, trust Me, watch and pray,
Arise, come away, night is past, and lo, it is day.
My love, My sister, My spouse, thou shalt hear Me say.
Then I answered: Yea.

Before considering the inner development of the Community, it will be convenient here to outline the subsequent relationship with the Bishops of the diocese. As before, when the time of their probation ended, the Sisters were made Deaconesses by the Bishop. This more public ceremony was preceded by a Eucharist in the Chapel at the Mission House, when the Sisters made their Profession and were admitted to full membership in the Community. The Reverend C. J. Godby, who became Warden in 1900, officiated, sometimes assisted by the Reverend Evelyn Snodgrass. Numerically, these early years were of phenomenally slow growth, and this is responsible in part, no doubt, for the rocklike stability of the foundation. With the coming of Bishop (afterwards Archbishop) Lowther Clarke from England to occupy the see of Melbourne, a new era opened. The conventual terms of speech,

so long employed among the Sisters and their friends, come boldly into print, and then came the happy day when a Sister was Professed by the Bishop of Ballarat, acting for the Archbishop. In 1911, Sister Ida, destined later to bear rule as Mother Superior, was the first Sister to make her Profession before the Archbishop of the diocese in person. Those who had wandered through deserts and dry places could offer their 'In exitu Israel' in thanksgiving to God, and Sister Esther, the star who had risen while yet it was night, could welcome the glad morning for which she had kept faithful vigil.

The long patience and loyalty to authority was rewarded further, and most fittingly, when the Community was given its treasured Charter by the Archbishop. With what emotion would the Mother Foundress receive that document into her hands and read there the vindication of what she had done and what she had suffered. 'We Henry Lowther by Divine Providence Archbishop of Melbourne being fully persuaded of the loyalty of the said Sisters to the Church and of their entire devotion to the service of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ do hereby give to the aforesaid Community our full recognition as a Community within the Church of England in this our Diocese of Melbourne reserving to ourselves and to our successors all rights of episcopal supervision and visitation of the Community.'

Some years later, His Grace, as President of the Council of the Mission to the Streets and Lanes of Melbourne, signed the following communication, dated 4th September, 1918:

To Sister Esther,

Superior of the Community of the Holy Name,
Diocese of Melbourne.

The Council charged with supporting the varied work done by the Diocesan Sisters in the Diocese of

> Melbourne bring to you on this thirtieth anniversary of the beginning of the work their affectionate greetings and their heartfelt appreciation of the part you have taken in the successful growth of the work.
>
> Yours has been throughout all these years the guiding hand and the inspiring power in every department. We recognise the great wisdom and the deep devotion with which you have guided the work of the Sisters and we desire for you many more years of health and strength to enable you to continue to serve the Church in this Diocese.
>
> We wish further to express our appreciation of all which is being done by the noble-minded Sisters who are your fellow-workers and we pray that the Divine Blessing may rest upon both you and them.

As we turn to the consideration of certain aspects of the corporate life of the Community, it is appropriate to make some reference to the dress of the Sisters—the Religious Habit. In 1889 our Mother Foundress reverentially laid aside her 'Wantage habit' (but we shall hear of it again), and those first three Sisters assumed a habit of uniform style which proclaimed to the world and to themselves that they were united by a spiritual bond of unity. During the years the habit of the Community has undergone certain changes, while retaining the simplicity of its original conception. No explanation of its symbolism is attempted here. To its wearer it speaks, conjointly and in its several parts, of the grace and joy which are the portion of those who wear the livery of Christ.

Those who joined Sister Esther at this first period knew nothing of the observances of the Religious Life, and little enough of its fundamental principles. They came to give themselves to God in the service of His Church, strong in

faith and in the resolution that whatsoever He would say unto them, they would do it. These neophytes had to be guided and instructed through all the details of an unfamiliar way of life. The learning of the Divine Office, and facility in its dignified rendering, forms an important part of a Sister's training. Think what it meant when there was a profound ignorance about the construction, and manner of recitation, of the Divine Office, and an utter lack of that background of knowledge concerning its history and place as an integral part of the Religious Life. Some of the early Sisters recall the astonishment felt when, as visitors, they entered the chapel to find Sister Esther saying an Office alone and aloud.

Some of the music attempted was too ambitious for the small numbers. Canon Snodgrass said of the singing at the first Midnight Mass (in 1903): 'If I were on my deathbed and thought of that introit, it would be said of me that I died of laughing.'

There is yet another factor to be considered. The austerity of the Plain-chant in its pure and primal modes affords the barest minimum of self-expression. In a young and vigorous country like ours, self-expression has been, not merely the theme-song of the new and rising generation, but almost an instrument of self-preservation. The fathers of the Australian-born knew what it meant to wrest a living from the reluctant earth; to build up a home in the teeth of strong natural forces—flood, fire and drought; to establish a cultural and social group despite great odds. These conditions have passed, or are passing away, but the national cast of mind which they impressed on us remains. In the few parishes where it could be heard the local interpretation of the spirit of plainsong was not such as to commend it to those unfamiliar with it, while to those who had heard it in its glory and beauty

elsewhere it might very well be a source of exquisite torture. Indeed, when the 'Life' was published of Hannah Grier Coombe, the Mother Foundress of the Canadian Community of St. John the Divine, and the story told there of a verger being asked what he thought of the newly introduced Plain-Chant, many of us thought he had answered for us when he said, 'It is like a h'animal in h'agony.'

Hindered, perhaps protected, by her deafness, the Mother taught us all we could absorb from her, and whatever she may have thought we always imagined we were singing the best Gregorian when we made a joyful noise unto the Lord at festal vespers. When the Mother returned from England in 1927, she brought with her sufficient copies of the Manual of Plainsong, published by Novello, and the Sisters applied themselves as best they might to its study. This visit to England brought the shock of surprise to the Mother as she realised that we had got ourselves into a backwater with our music. Conscious of failing health (she was then nearly seventy), she felt incapable of rallying her forces adequately to meet the situation. At that time she wrote: 'I have been very disappointed to find that the Gregorian music which we sing is quite out of date. In the Sisterhoods and the churches they sing in a way which would seem very curious to our Sisters, and I cannot imagine how they would take to it, or whether I could teach it to them.'

The term, 'The Regular Life', as applied to Religion reminds us that it is a life under Rule. The history of religious rule makes a fascinating study, whether traced through the centuries or within one particular Order. For members of a Community the practical value of their Rule is that it unites them to God, and in Him to one another, so that no matter

how diverse the outward circumstances of their lives they face the world from a common ground.

Many influences besides that of C.S.M.V. (Wantage) can be traced within our Rule. Our Foundress was a realist, and dealt with the situation as she found it, and she did not scruple to write some of the Rule herself and to couch it in her own vigorous prose. Its content places the Community in the category of those living the Mixed Life of prayer and labour.

First in line of all the holy and humble men of heart who have served the Community is Henry Handfield, Priest of God, for whose ministry many souls had cause to thank the Giver of all good. Prominent amongst the influences which made for stability in the infant Community, we must place the life of this saintly priest. His intense reserve bred in him a hatred of controversy and a distrust of all that was showy. 'I do not suppose I know more on this subject than any of you know, or might know with a little reading'; thus in his humility he spoke to his fellow-priests of that which they regarded as his special subject—the Ministry of Women in the Church. Canon Handfield's position was that of Chaplain to the Mission, an office which merged later into that of Warden. He was not the Sisters' Chaplain in the sense of being their Confessor—that office was filled, first by the Reverend J. F. Stretch, and then by the Reverend J. C. Love—and as we study Canon Handfield's relationship to the Sisters we see that the particular contribution which he made was in the role of Teacher; first by his faithful witness to all that was high and holy and Christlike, and secondly as the exponent of the truths of our Holy Faith.

The Office of Chaplain was held for eight years by Canon Sutton, who made his own contribution of stability and sound

learning, building solidly on the firm foundations. His duties as Vicar of a large parish and as Canon of the Cathedral and examining chaplain to the Archbishop did not allow him to give much time to Community affairs, and he generously permitted the Sisters to apply for spiritual help to a priest who visited Melbourne from time to time. His loyal support of the Sisters doubtless furthered their cause with the diocesan authorities, and helped to secure that recognition for which the Mother Foundress fought.

In 1918 the Reverend A. E. White became Chaplain. A 'Mirfield man', he had been a member of the Bush Brotherhood in the diocese of Bunbury; as he liked to tell of himself, having volunteered as a missionary he had been sent to Australia. The war years were spent as Chaplain to the Forces. He brought to the Community the ardour of a faith in which love was the fulfilling of the law; love reverential, profound and self-abasing before the holiness of the Eternal Father; joyous, transforming and sacrificial in response to the self-giving of the Son of God; all-embracing, all pervading, as the Spirit of God drove the soul out on the path of service. The wonderful Retreats which he conducted cemented the Sisters together as never before in the spiritual adventure of the pursuit of holiness; and his belief in the Community stirred the Sisters to greater heights of endeavour.

When presently there was for them the hard lesson of detachment in parting with this much-loved priest, the Communiy was fortunate in securing the services of the Reverend W. G. A. Green. In the new Chaplain the Sisters found one with the loftiest ideals of the Religious vocation and a great and abiding affection for what he ever termed 'The Beloved Community.' This last-named priest confesses that he was too much in awe of the Mother Foundress to profit by the

association as he should have done. Yet it is interesting to see how both he and his predecessor, younger than those who formerly had served as Chaplains, both with strong views about the direction the Community should take, could work with the ageing Foundress in the bonds of harmony.

The story of the Foundress as the Mother within the Community is reserved for those who are of her spiritual family, for it reveals the intimacies of the home. In the self-abnegation of the mother, human character attains to the highest pinnacle of sacrificial love. In the family a good mother is, par excellence, the custodian of the spirit of the home, setting the standard of conduct and watchful that nothing lowers its tone. This is true of the relationships within the religious family, with its strong home ties, its peculiar privileges, responsibilities and loyalties, its intercommunication of love and fellowship. 'She giveth meat to her household, and their task to her maidens.' There is nothing to be gained by a mere accumulation of words about that. The subject of this Memoir is one whose life was a lamp which shone with borrowed light. It was not by chance that Wantage named her 'Esther', for she shines as a star in the firmament of her children, with steady radiance pointing them to Christ, the Sun of Righteousness.

Chapter VIII.

THE LAST CALL.

'Her price is far above rubies.'

Through all the years of close preoccupation with the affairs of the Community and the direction of its expanding work, the Mother kept before her the hope of visiting England again. The brief visit in 1896 had given but fleeting glimpses of loved persons and places. There had been time for no more than a week's stay at St. Mary Magdalene's Home in Paddington, a 'Wantage House' where her dear Sister Eliza was Superior; there had been a few weeks in Norfolk with her relatives, a short visit to Manchester as the guest of the Bishop and Mrs. Moorhouse, and a few days interlude of great restfulness and beauty on the North Devon coast. With the fervour of the exile the Mother longed to see her dear homeland again, and in the year 1927 that desire was fulfilled. Accompanied by a Sister whose privilege and responsibility it was to care for the Mother and guard her health, she travelled to England in a cargo boat which carried only five other passengers. Four of these were well-known and dear friends. The Consul for Belgium, M. Rene Vanderkelen, and his wife were travelling to Brussels. The latter was the Mother's cousin, and in their pleasant home at Hawthorn she sought occasionally a few hours relaxation. The Reverend Richard and Mrs. Sherwood were on a visit to England after some years in Melbourne, where this priest, who was Precentor of St. Paul's Cathedral, was a regular and welcome visitor at the

Mission House. As the uneventful voyage progressed the Mother's longing for England increased daily, and though weeks of rain followed their arrival it was a relief to settle into the little flat in London which was to be the Sisters' home between the visits which they at once set themselves to arrange.

Received with honour and accorded the place of highest dignity in the Religious Communities, unexpectedly and somewhat embarrassingly brought to the fore at missionary gatherings and meetings of social welfare workers, the Mother tasted now something of the sweetness of fulfilment. Her humility was shown in the naive surprise with which she received these marks of respect, protesting that this was the Englishman's politeness to the traveller from the antipodes. Lively accounts from the Mother's pen informed the Community of their doings, and gave vivid descriptions of churches and churchmanship. Diary entries on these topics are brief and pointed. Visits to relatives were dovetailed into tours of inspection of homes, refuges, and settlements, all being arranged so as to put the least strain upon the Mother's strength. In these institutions, and in the Women's Gaol and the Children's Court, the Mother was on familiar ground, and her experience enabled her to put her finger on the strong point of any system, or to detect weaker ones. Several priests who had served in Australia were seen, and among other friends was the ninety-six-years-old Miss Gleadow, a pioneer of the Mission and one of the first Associates.

Great as was the happiness of these meetings, and lively the interest in the varied experiences, yet the visits to the Religious Houses had for the Mother the most significance. And of these, two in particular. When Archbishop Lowther Clarke had given us full recognition as a Religious Community, and we wished to adopt the title of 'The Community of the

Holy Name', our Mother had written to the English Community of that name at Malvern Link, asking if they had any objection to our doing so. The response had been a frank and generous expression of fellowship: 'I say to you in all Christian love: Go on and prosper, and may God abundantly bless you and the Australian Community of the Holy Name.' So the English Mother Superior had written. And now at last the invitation then given could be accepted, and our Mother and Sister travelled through the lovely Western counties to that serene and beautiful spot facing the Malvern Hills. A delightful visit resulted, on one afternoon of which the entire household, sisters, novices and postulants, assembled in the garden while our Mother told them something of the Melbourne C.H.N.

The visit to the Community of St. Mary at Wantage was arranged for August, so that part of the octave of our festival of the Holy Name might be spent there. The feast itself, with the days which preceded and followed it, was spent by invitation at the Heathfield Retreat House of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. The Mother was taken ill on the last night of this visit, but after a few days rest and care she was well enough to proceed to Wantage.

Now that this long-looked-for moment had come, the Mother was painfully nervous and wished that she might withdraw. It was as if she feared that her cherished dream of this place might be shattered; that the present might contrast unfavourably with the tender idealising of the past; that she might be received as a stranger where she had been so happy and loved and at home. What this association meant to her was shown in the pitiful and most unusual state of tension which she was unable to hide from her anxious, loving companion. Wantage town was so changed that the Mother was

at a loss which direction to take, but a Sister who had been in the 'bus came to their rescue when she learnt their destination, telling of her work in Africa as they walked up the Plat. This was friendly; this was familiar; but the critical moment was yet to come: a minute or so of suspense as they waited together in the reception room, and then the Mother General and her Assistant entered. 'Welcome Home!' and all fears were forgotten in the warmth and cordiality of perfect understanding. There were smiles of sympathy as the Mother recalled her departure forty years before, but now she had come again with joy, 'And I have brought my sheaf with me,' she declared, as her own Sister and daughter was introduced. During this visit the Mother's happiness was visible to all, and was remembered long after at Wantage. This was her Nazareth, as it were, where was nourished that vocation which was dearer to her than life itself. Here in simplicity and hiddenness, she had been prepared for her life's work. As from her place beside the Mother General she gazed down the length of chapel or refectory, she must indeed have been like unto them that dream, seeing the vindication, not of herself, but of the ways of God, as He made all His goodness to pass before her.

Mother Isabel Mary, the holy and gifted 'actress-nun', who had been re-elected to her office a few days before this visit took place, showed great kindness to our Mother. At this time Sister Maribel was fashioning her beautiful sculptures in the studio, from whence our Mother carried back to Australia the crucifix which she hung over her desk—that crucifix of triumph which depicts the Young Prince of Glory in His willing self-oblation.

So it was that this place, this religious family, which had received our Mother as a girl and by the inscrutable providence of God had trained her for us, now welcomed her

back for a brief moment in the evening of her life. Her Nunc Dimittis said, she could go forth again to finish the course upon which here her feet had been set. Dear Mother-and-Sister Community of Wantage, accept the love and gratitude with which we take our place among those who have been strengthened and inspired by you.

The chief joy of the visit to England was the knitting up of ties which had grown slack over the long interval of time and space: ties of blood, of friendship, of spiritual affinity. Yet it was in the nature of farewell, too, and looking back we see that on this note it gently brought in the last period of the Mother's life. A few years remained in which the Mother was to administer her office with the same thoroughness as before, but the old energy had spent itself, and was dropping down in a quiet cadence. In 1888, when Sister Esther had come to Australia, many people foretold her early death, many feared for her a life of invalidism. Yet she laboured here for forty-three years. Her strong will, her zest for life, enabled her to fight on where others would have halted or turned back. 'The more pressing things were, the brighter she was,' said one who knew her well. 'God had a work for me here,' were her own simple words. Bishop Hart could say of all that she accomplished: 'Simply as a work of successful organisation her work is unique in the Commonwealth.' The wonder is, not only what she did, but that she did it at that time. Towards the end of her life the Mother could look about her at the Church, and at the Community set in its midst, and know that she had striven to some purpose. She had seen hostility towards the Religious Life melt into toleration, and toleration warm into appreciation.

Did this public acclamation and acceptance give to the Mother a sense of achievement and victory? Those who were

nearest to her knew that it did not. In proportion as that which she had wrought for God and His people was recognized, so there grew in her a sense of detachment and a strange diffidence about the part which she had played. Perhaps it was simply that her warrior spirit did not know what to do with success; that it produced in her questionings which were never present in the time of battle. Perhaps as the last stages of her pilgrimage led upwards, she saw that she could lay down her work only in the spirit of that other visionary who cried, 'So much to do. So little done.' But if we think of her life, as indeed we must, as one lived always towards God in the attitude of response, then perhaps we shall see that this absence of a sense of eclat was part of that stripping of earthly things which was to prepare her for her last great call.

It is a well known fact that the deaf have to bear a degree of loneliness which others are spared. All her life the Mother loved and was stimulated by the exchange of ideas, the quick give and take of conversation with interesting, amusing, and intellectual people. Her growing deafness made communication with her a laborious thing, shut her off from general conversation, and closed to her those nuances of meaning and expression which had been such a delight to her keen mind. Undoubtedly, this loss was a spiritual gain. Silence is no penance to those who love God. Our Mother had taught us that the Divine Voice is heard most clearly in the silence of the heart which is content to love and wait until 'it shall be told thee what thou must do.' Surprising, sometimes, that far-away expression in her eyes, one would feel like an intruder, an impression instantly dispelled by the Mother's courteous interest, as her quick imagination and sympathy enabled her to enter into the matter brought before her.

The Mother's spirit of willing surrender to all the

discipline of life, as uniting her to God, is expressed in some words whch perhaps illumine this time for us. They are part of a meditation on the words 'I am crucified with Christ.'

> Our Blessed Lord as a child took up His Cross, and carried it through life till He reached Calvary, and then laid it down and Himself upon it, stretching out His hands to receive the nails. The end of His natural life was crucifixion. Our lives must be the same. We are led from Bethlehem—our First Communion—through the wilderness, to the cross. We cannot lead the supernatural life until crucifixion has ended the life of nature. When we came to the Community and made our first promises of obedience at the altar, we knew it meant the cross. Look at your crucifix. The world regards it as a mere representation of an historical fact which took place nineteen hundred years ago—a one-sided view. If we are Christ's, it is the picture of what is going on in everyone of us, now. It means that we must stretch out our hands and wait for the nails; each blow that comes is a means to an end, for it fastens us more firmly to Him.
>
> Crucifixion comes at the end. It is not the beginning of the natural life. There may be many a weary day of crossbearing before the Cross bears you. Jesus fell under His Cross, so you may fall many times before you reach the end and you are crucified, beyond the reach of trouble because you have attained to the perfect law of liberty. Realise that all sorrows and mortifications, if borne with Christ, help to the true end of Christian life.

There speaks the true athlete of Christ, stripped and ready for the spiritual adventure—the scaling of Mount Calvary. 'Surely in what place my Lord and King shall be, whether for death or life, even there also will Thy servant be.'

The onset of the Mother's last illness was very sudden. On the morning of that day, Wednesday, the 2nd September, 1931, she had insisted on going into the city to transact some business. Most of the Sisters had to be away from the house that afternoon, and when a Sister came in from a branch house the Mother kept her for some hours, questioning her about her work and talking about Community affairs. The Mother owned that she had several things she ought to do, but that she was very tired. 'Can't I help you, Mother?' 'You are always helping me. You have never given me five minutes' anxiety.' The loving words were followed by a rare embrace. (Many Sisters thought afterwards that the added tenderness of the Mother's manner in these few days bespoke a premonition that she was soon to leave us.) Vesper time came. Though the Mother must have been feeling ill she did not forget to signal an enquiry to one who had just returned from a trying interview, and to show her gladness at the reassuring nod. Soon after the Office began, the Mother left the chapel, so quietly and unhurriedly that it was some minutes before one of the Sisters followed her. She found the Mother in a state of collapse nearby. The doctor was summoned, and it was recognised that she was seriously ill. All the Houses were notified, and hopefulness and anxiety struggled together for a few days while the Mother's condition worsened gradually. She was so bright, so loving, so thoughtful of the Sisters and of the two nurses who had come from St. Ives' to care for her. The doctor, an old and much-loved friend, joked with her as always, though away from her bedside that mask fell

off as he thought what her loss would mean to him. 'She was given to this generation to keep men's faith in goodness alight,' he said.

On the following Monday Sister Alice arrived from Newcastle, and Sister Christina came from Cheltenham to see the Mother, who had become much weaker. The next day she received the Last Sacraments. The restlessness of the first periods of semi-consciousness was stilled when the Mother's prayer-book was put into her hands. Within its pages her pen had captured some of the soaring aspirations of her soul, and the touch of the familiar book seemed to convey a message of comfort to one who had ever sought her strength in prayer. Soon after this she lapsed into unconsciousness, from which she did not rally. Sister Alice organised the chain of intercession which was offered unbroken from that time until our Mother's body was laid to rest. Day and night, a Sister knelt at the Mother's prie-dieu at the foot of her bed, while others kept watch in the chapel. Thus for three days she lingered, until on Friday, the 11th September, her last call came. Fortified by the Sacraments of the Church she had so loved and served, sustained by the prayers of her children, the focus of the loving thoughts of all those to whom she had been counsellor and friend—at ten o'clock on that Friday evening, just as the Commendatory Prayers were concluded, the gallant spirit of our Mother Foundress left her tired body for the Paradise of God.

It was the Mother's wish that she should be buried in her Wantage habit, which had been kept with scrupulous care for this purpose. Now it lay ready to hand, the label writ large 'My first (blessed) habit. To be buried in.' Thus she was clothed, the Wantage cross in her hands, the habit completed by the wimple and veil, the cross and girdle, of the

Community which she had founded. We may see here the harmony of a life wherein unswerving faithfulness to the first call, to that first taking up the cross, is fused with a joyful alacrity of response as the vocation in all its rich complexity is realised from day to day. Beautiful she looked, and young, with a lovely serenity, and seeing how lightly death had touched her, there sprang up the unselfish joy and thankfulness that God had called her away when He did, sparing her the trial of a long illness.

It seemed as though all Melbourne hastened to do her honour. The press and the pulpit vied with one another to pay tribute to the great citizen, the great Christian. Rich and poor, old and young, clergy and laity, all united in paying respect to one who possessed the rare faculty of inspiring devotion and affection among all sorts and conditions of men. Nowhere was there a more beautiful tribute to the Mother's influence than among the girls at the House of Mercy. While the Mother lay ill, the girls had shown their respect for her, and their sympathy with the Sisters, by the most exemplary conduct and self-discipline, thus enabling the Sisters who worked with them to spend much time with the Mother, and in prayer for her. On the day of the burial, these girls bound themselves to observe a day of silence, broken only by necessary remarks whispered to, or by, the head girl of each department, as without supervision they carried on the various works with the utmost efficiency.

On Holy Cross Day, the 14th September, the Requiem was celebrated by the Chaplain, assisted by the Reverend Richard Sherwood. The funeral service which followed was conducted in the Mission Hall, where the accommodation was altogether inadequate for the great numbers that gathered. Only the Cathedral would have been large enough and it was

there that the Archbishop (the Most Reverend F. W. Head) wished it to be, but the Mother had said it must be at the Mission Hall where her humbler friends felt at home. The Archbishop and the Bishops of Wangaratta and Bendigo were present (The Right Reverend Donald Baker, then Bishop of Bendigo, was the Mother's cousin), and about sixty priests. Prominent knights, doctors, and government officials mingled freely with the poor folk of the neighbourhood. The Venerable Archdeacon Hancock, Archdeacon of Melbourne and Warden of the Community, preached the sermon, the substance of which was as follows:—

> Rom. xv., 13: Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.
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> In Bishopscourt chapel, last Thursday evening, our Archbishop read those words to his Archdeacons, as the concluding verse of one of the lessons for the day. They brought me great comfort at the time, as I thought of the Mother of this Community, even then passing through the valley of the shadow of death, and especially as I remembered that the definite article stands before the word 'hope' in each occurrence of it in this chapter. 'Now the God of the hope'—the Christian hope, the hope of glory—'fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in the hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.' And as I pondered over them, these words seemed to me to express the working principle of her life. 'The God of the hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.' Sister Esther was what she was, and did what she did, because of her creed.

She was a woman of strong convictions. To her, faith was more than belief, more than mere intellectual assent. It was to her what it was to Coleridge,—'An affirmation and an act that bids eternal truth be present fact.' The articles of her Creed were present facts of her life. Sister Esther was a child of the Oxford Movement, the spiritual daughter of such men as Keble and Pusey, Butler and Church and Liddon. And it is not too much to say that these men rediscovered for the Church of England certain articles of the Christian Faith. If the Evangelical Revival under John Wesley laid emphasis upon the Cross of Christ and the personal approach to Him as the Lover of souls, the Oxford Revival stressed the Gospel of the Incarnation of Our Blessed Lord: the Church as His Body; the extension of the Incarnation, and the organ of the Holy Spirit; the Sacraments as the highest means of grace; and, as a corollary, the sweet doctrine of the Communion of Saints, in which let us pray we may find comfort to-day. These were the Christian truths upon which the Mother's soul lived and grew. These were the doctrines which fashioned her character. These were the convictions which were translated into practice in all her devotional life and all her active ministry as Foundress and Superior of this Community of the Holy Name. The God of the hope filled her with all joy and peace in believing, and made you also through her to abound in the hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Because she so firmly believed in the Gospel of the Incarnation she could despair of no child of humanity. Because her faith in this doctrine

was so strong she believed in the perfectibility of human nature. Because she abounded in the hope of this Gospel, she began her mission amongst the outcast and fallen nearby, forty-three years ago. No heart, she felt, was too hard for the melting power of such a Gospel.

Because she believed that the Church is the Body of Christ, the organ of the Holy Spirit, and therefore holy and catholic, she longed to claim every child of the slums, through Holy Baptism, as a member of Christ, the child of God. Her religion was a sacramental religion. She believed that the sacraments were effectual means of grace. Strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ imparted to her in the sacrament of His Love, she went forth to her work and to her labour until the evening. To her might be applied the lines of Matthew Arnold's poem, 'East London':

'Ill and o'er worked, how fare you in this scene?'
'Bravely,' said he, 'for I of late have been
Much cheered by thoughts of Christ, the Living
Bread.'

And she believed in the Communion of Saints. Death to her was not the end, but only a bend in the pathway of life. This conviction implied for her the mutual prayers of those in Paradise and those on earth. It means for us who hold intensely that article of our Faith, that her work has not ceased, that she has entered into a higher realm of service, that it was expedient for us that she should go away

that so she might more closely be associated with our Ascended Lord, in His ministry of intercession.

This, then, is the lesson of her life; the word that she, being dead, yet speaketh: 'Now the God of the hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in the hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

In the quiet little cemetery at Cheltenham, our Mother's body was laid to rest. It was a beautiful spring day, of soft, bright sunshine, the heavenly blue of the sky broken by a few fleecy clouds. The song of the birds formed an accompaniment to the prayers at the grave, above which a friendly swallow skimmed and dipped in the ecstasy of flight. Sorrow at the loss of one so dear, pride and thankfulness at having been associated in closest fellowship with such a great lover of God, prayer for the guidance of her motherless children—these thoughts and many others yield place to the conviction, that here in the presence of that which we call death, we are brought closer to a higher degree of life, untrammelled by the bondage of earth. 'Love puts us to school, Love orders the school, Love is longing to set us free from it when we are ready.' So she had written, and now she has penetrated the last disguise of Love. 'I sleep, but my heart waketh. It is the Voice of my Beloved.'

EPILOGUE.

'Her children rise up and call her blessed.'

Though the oak could not be inferred from the acorn, the beauty and might of the tree lie within its narrow compass. 'Meadows and gardens running through my hands', exults the poet, as in the seed-shop he fingers the brown and dusty cells in which the cedars and the lilies of the future are imprisoned. Called to be fellow-workers with God, He entrusts to us the seed of eternal life, and gives us our little span of mortality as our working allotment. Whether our predominant task is to plant or to water matters not. God gives the increase, and to the bare grain that we sow, a body as it shall please Him. 'The Religious State is called the Garden of Holy Church. Pray that the Holy Spirit may make of C.H.N. a garden enclosed, with all the fruits of the orchard.' So our Mother Foundress wrote for her daughters, and we know that it was not given to her to see all her work, or its fruits. Once founded, the Religious Family cannot be static. If it lives, it grows: throwing out fresh branches here, modifying certain trends there, clinging to the old or casting it off as the Spirit moves within it. Its oneness with the past is ensured and manifested, not through a lifeless unchangeability, but through union with that which is triumphant and indestructible, the very Life of God.

This adjustment was seen within the Community in the Mother Foundress' lifetime, and has been seen increasingly since. Our first Sisters fulfilled their vocation against a back-

ground of times and conditions which happily are no more. With the awakening of the social conscience, various organisations within the Church have devoted themselves to the corporal works of mercy. A changing social order, and the assumption by the State of many works of social and moral welfare, has freed the Community for fresh adventures of the spirit.

The changes and developments in exterior works can be related in a few words. In the diocese of Goulburn, the work centres in St. Saviour's Home for Children. The Community will be responsible for the management of a Girls' Hostel which is to be opened in the Bishop's former residence, next door to St. Saviour's. The work in Adelaide, begun in 1945, has changed already from that of a Mission House to a Hostel for business and school girls. Significant of the changing times, the long-established work at the House of Mercy has been relinquished, and another form of service has taken its place. Dedicated in 1946 to its new purpose, 'The Retreat House' filled at once a manifest need, providing facilities for Conferences as well as Retreats. Many hundreds of persons, both of the clergy and laity, have sought spiritual refreshment there. The House is used, not by those of the Melbourne diocese only, but by the Province, and even more widely. Its proximity to the Community House is a source of strength. Other Branch Houses continue to function as before, the Hospitals against increasing difficulties.

When the Community House at Cheltenham was built in the Mother Foundress' memory, it was desired thus to secure a home for the ageing Sisters and a centre of training for the Novitiate. The beautiful chapel was consecrated in 1940. The establishment of this House has contributed very largely to the remarkable growth and development of the Community,

through the strengthening of the spiritual life of its members and of all those associations which have to do with its life of fellowship. Here, too, the Sisters can give themselves more fully to the work of prayer, as in the maintenance of that weekly night of prayer which was undertaken upon the outbreak of war in 1939. An earnest and sustained study of the Divine Office has enriched the Community's corporate worship. With the growing knowledge, there has come also a deeper understanding that the Plain-chant in its integrity is the true voice of the spirit, the freest and most comprehensive medium by which the words of the Divine Office are lifted in praise to God. The importance of this is seen when it is considered that the Divine Office is essentially vocal prayer, the worship which the Church offers to God as the Word of God, its theme the praise of God in His Being and in His Self-revelation through His Son. In the study of this great subject we have reached a day wherein we know ourselves to be faint, yet pursuing. It is recognized that such a development not only unites us with all the Religious of the Church on earth, but it also identifies us with our own past, interpreting its strivings and encouraging us to persevere.

Numerically, the Community has doubled its membership during these eighteen years. We give thanks for the lives dedicated here, and believing as we do that in the purpose of God the Religious State exists in the first place to uphold the ideals of holiness within the Church, rather than to afford satisfaction to individual piety, we rejoice for this access of strength.

'Prayer, faith and grind will accomplish anything.' That maxim, absorbed by our Foundress from 'Butler of Wantage', and faithfully practised, must be ours as we go on from the celebration of our Diamond Jubilee to whatever the future may hold, perhaps other ways of service. The word to Esther still stands: 'Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this.'

127153 92 Es86c
Community of the Holy Name,
Melbourne.
Esther, Mother foundress

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